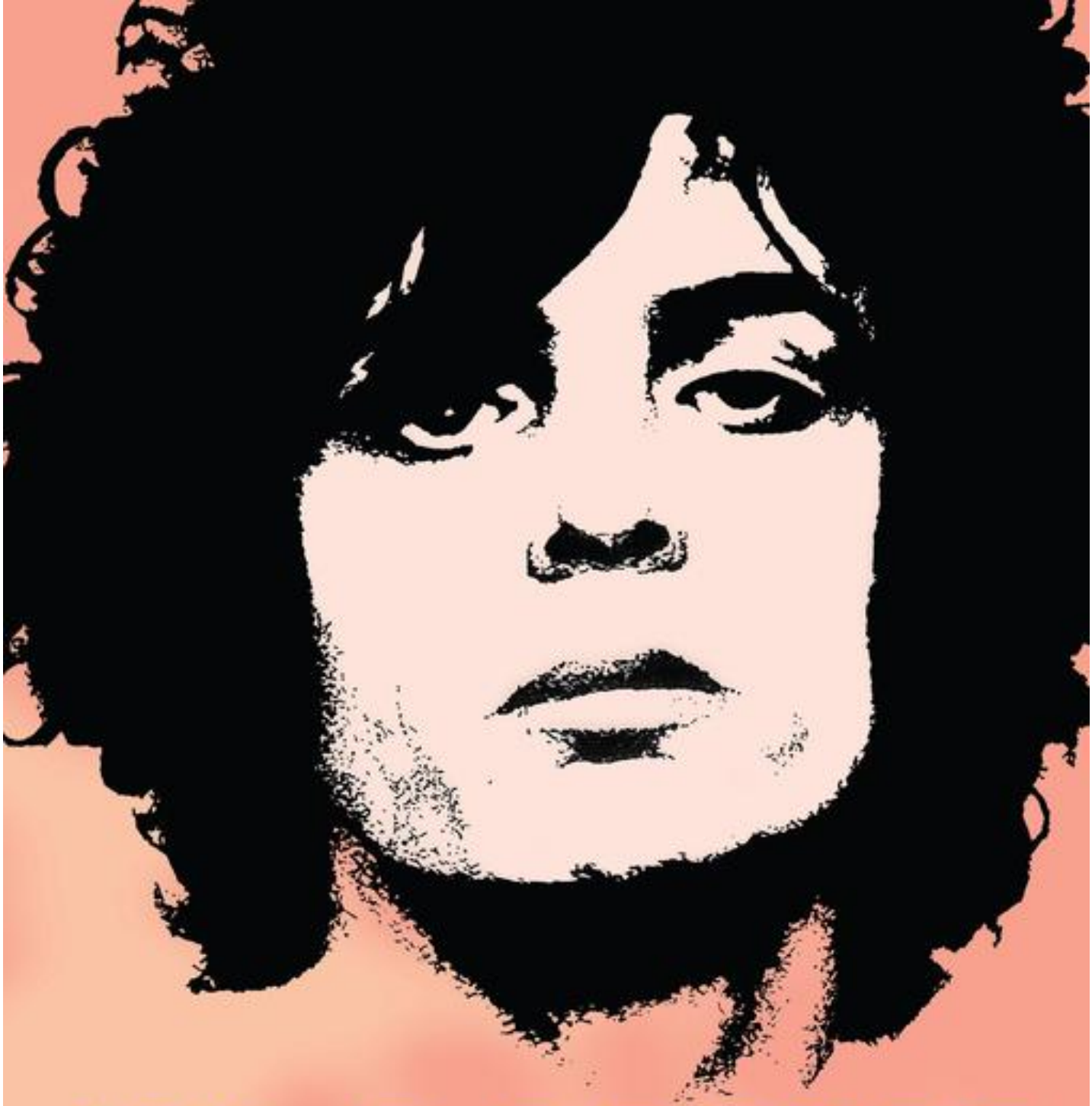

SYD BARRETT & PINK FLOYD

DARK GLOBE

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Plexus, London

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FOREWORD: GENESIS BREYER P-ORRIDGE

When we think of Syd, we first see his eyes. Syd's eyes were haunted, but not haunted by something terrifying that he had seen and hated to face in the way we usually think of it. Haunted by the sheer complexity of everything in this universe and the none-sensus reality we humans seem to inhabit. Overwhelmed by the sensory responsibilities of seeing endlessly spiralling strands of DNA that programme our lives, our behaviours – both as individuals and as a species.

Syd saw infinite fractals of fragile nature in layer after layer, interconnecting and separating, spinning particles filled with information and messages expanding and multiplying in intricate webs that threaten to paralyse all flexibility until we are entombed, immobile in a paralysis of inertia. The eyes have it, as they say in the hallowed halls of power.

Why was Syd so haunted by seeing so many strata of meaning and possibility? Because Syd was one of the rarest of souls that grace our transient paths of mortality. He was a storyteller, in the ancient sense of the shaman who instructs, forewarns, re-*minds* and heals others of their people, their clan, their culture or their chosen family and their community. This is a sacred calling, a spiritual duty that once understood as one's fate cannot be denied, no matter what the price.

In the Middle Ages, this would be the troubadour. The musician-poet who wandered from court to court, castle to castle, inventing songs and allegories of love, lust, betrayal, and all other aspects of the human condition – often at the risk of brutal punishment, or even execution, should they offend the authority deciding the status quo of the moment. Regardless of danger, these beings are charged with seeking spiritual wisdoms to describe, interpret and, occasionally, even to elicit sense from nonsense.

For Syd, this 'religious' obligation required language. Syd took and used words in order to describe incredibly difficult revelations and observations on our behalf. After exploring new landscapes, alien

territories and complex feelings, his task was to retrieve what useable ‘maps’ and explanations he could to share with his chosen community through the medium of the song. Lyrical lyrics. This demands an immensity of metaphor few can reach.

When we read Syd’s lyrics it would be easy to assume the jumbling, layering, colliding, anarchy of his surreal combinations is chaotic – reflecting a chaotic mind. But, we would contend that his smashing together of clusters of images and phrases is not designed to create chaos, nor even describe it, but is ironically, a technique born of genius to enable him to be ever more *precise* and orderly in his messages.

In the 1950s, W.S. Burroughs and Brion Gysin sought to liberate ‘the word’ in order to discover new ways to write ‘reality’ as we really experience it through all five senses simultaneously, plus memories triggered, plus expectations of possible and impossible repercussions. With *Finnegans Wake*, James Joyce had tried to write down what the inside of a thinking brain is like. Samuel Beckett attempted to imply the nature of consciousness without motive – but, until Syd Barrett, nobody had really applied this aspiration to the (often dismissed as banal) pop song, except maybe Bob Dylan.

What Burroughs and Gysin proposed was a tool they dubbed ‘The Cut-Up’ where they literally cut-up pieces of their own texts and texts by other writers, then re-assembled them at random ‘…to see what it *really* says’, as Burroughs pointed out. What they achieved was a neo-magickal system somewhere between prophecy and function. In their book *The Third Mind,* they discuss the various successes and failures of these experiments.

We had the great fortune to see the original Pink Floyd at the UFO Club and Middle Earth in the sixties and later without Syd several times in 1969 when they were promoting *Ummagumma*. There’s no space to discuss the pros and cons of Pink Floyd with and without Syd musically, though my personal preference remains for with Syd. What seems vital to focus upon is the poetic core of the Syd songs. He may seem to be extending an infatuation with the likes of Edward Lear, Lewis Carroll, *The Wind in the Willows* and nonsense limericks, as has been pointed out many times. (In fact ‘Octopus’ has been noted as consisting almost

entirely of quotes from other people's poems, which is a pure cut-up in the tradition of the Beats.)

What seems to me to be the purest aspect of Syd's genius is his appropriation of a highly stylised, individual language all of his own in order to achieve the impossible of describing a holographic picture of life, of existence – both internally and externally. From the microscopic quantum landscape of psychedelically revealed particles, to the galactic expanse of space, stars, the planets and light.

In his solo work, Syd chose to insist on the inclusion of studio 'mistakes' or 'miss*takes*', as he might playfully say. Syd is reminding us over and over again that the means of perception and creation cannot and must not be controlled or constricted into more conventional formats. To solidify rules and parameters is to confine and sterilise the very essence of imagination. No stone can be left unturned in this search to comprehend.

Interestingly, legendary biologist Francis Crick only admitted years after his groundbreaking work discovering the double-helix structure of DNA that he had been using LSD regularly for problem solving at that time. Using small (then legal) amounts of LSD to increase his powers of analytical thought and speculation. It seems that Aldous Huxley had introduced him to this option. Crick said nothing at the time, as it might have been used to discredit his research.

Syd Barrett was using exactly the same process in his search to find the perfect phrase, chord, surprise, and joke that would encapsulate in some oblique but precise way the mystery of being alive and being an alive being. His innately shamanic tendencies were a blessing, in that they exposed vividly to him the intricacies of existence and a spiritual view of nature. They were also a curse, in that they were so shatteringly pervasive that he became lost within their infinity. In a very real sense, he was drowning in sensation and vision at the mercy of ubiquitous sensation. What he desperately needed was not to be cast adrift in the eye of his storm, but to feel a loving hand reach out to him, to rescue him unconditionally before his catastrophic isolation was compounded irreversibly by abandonment.

These would be *djinn* in some cultures, angels in others, tricksters and spirits slipping temporarily into this linear dimension, the one we each think of as ‘life’ as we talk to ourselves in our thoughts.

Syd Barrett took his journey for all of us. He was compelled to stare into the centre of all matter and meaning driven by an idealistic faith in the ultimate right to evolutionary salvation of our human species. He was not the first; he will not be the last of his kind.

Genesis Breyer P-Orridge, NYC

1. THE RIVER BANK

‘All movement is accomplished in six stages, and the seventh brings return.’

I Ching: Book of Changes
Chapter 24: Fû/Return – The Turning Point
Richard Wilhelm, translator, 1950

‘“So beautiful and strange and new! Since it was to end all too soon, I almost wish I had never heard it. Nothing seems worthwhile but to hear that sound once more and go on listening to forever. No! There it is again!” he cried, alert once more. Entranced, he was silent for a long space, spellbound.’

The Wind in the Willows
Kenneth Grahame, 1908

Strange lights once flickered in the Fens outside Cambridge, a bleak land rife with myth. As dogs whined into the darkness, chill winds blew in off the Fen, as lights shone at twilight over damp ground. Legend held it that will-o’-the-wisps or hob-o’-lanterns were spirits bearing lanterns, leading travellers on the road astray. In the eerie glow, lights flickered above dykes and bog, weaving a hypnotic spell on wayfarers, drawing them to brackish waters.

Cambridge rose from drained marshlands. Old English *fenns* formed a flat pastureland of dark, rich silt. Reclaimed from the North Sea in the 17th century, much of this land once lay below salty water. A battle between land and sea had been waged since the dawn of Cambridgeshire’s recorded history. Barriers of trees curbed high winds off the ocean. Uninhabited wetlands became England’s finest farmland.

The Fens were rumoured to be the haunt of lost souls, witches, and web-footed peasants. Inbred Fen folk roamed the swampy sedges,

traversing frozen ponds using bones as skates, as they hunted eels in lodes with three-pronged spears. No one would think of wandering in the Fens at night. They were too dangerous. The landscape was strewn with abbeys and monasteries set amid heavy, mist-laden bogs. Only monks and drovers knew the routes from one safe area to another.

Cambridge rose in the valley of the River Cam. With its source at Ashwell in Hertfordshire, the river feeds on through the Lower Cam, controlled by locks and weirs out toward the Fen. Merging with the Great Ouse south of Ely, it drifts into the North Sea at the lonely mudflat estuary of the Wash, where grey gulls screech amid the breakers.

Four miles south-east of Cambridge, the Gog Magog Downs, or Gogs, rise two hundred feet above the flat river valley. Here, pastures give way to outcroppings of chalk on the downs. The gradient is slight, less a climb then a vigorous walk to Wandlebury and Little Trees Hill. Steeped in ancient mystery, legend has it that Gog Magog the giant sleeps here, disenchanted by rejection from the nymph Granta in the river below.

Romans set up a garrison on Castle Hill overlooking the barren mire; they built a small town, Durolipons. In 410 AD, as the Empire collapsed, legions abandoned the town to invaders, leaving behind a long straight road known as the Roman Road. The ancient thoroughfare *Via Devana* that extends in a straight line along the perimeter of Wandlebury and the Beechwoods remains.

At the foot of the Magog Downs lies the springs of the Nine Wells – where children were warned not to play, as they were always associated with witchcraft and druids. The Nine Wells provides the water for Hobson's Conduit on Trumpington Street.

In the early 17th century, Dutch engineers built drains and dykes to pump out the water until the fens emerged. The land was fertile, but until then it had been a system of marshland, bogs, and small, sparsely inhabited islands. Towns like Frog's Abbey, Whittlesey and Downham Market emerged. Cambridge is laid bare to the fen where Huntingdon and St Ives stretch round to the Isle of Ely.

'East Anglia is an odd area,' affirms Syd Barrett's friend David Gale. 'Towns sit on this great flat expanse and can be seen from a distance. Driving from Cambridge, Ely looms out of the fens. Then across miles of flatland until reaching Norwich at the edge of the sea.'

Seamus O'Connell, friend of Roger Waters and Barrett, says, 'Around Cambridge is dead flat, except for the Gogs nearby. In winter, we got ghastly cold winds from the north.'

Cambridge seems colder in winter, with arctic winds blowing across flat fields, coming straight in off the North Sea, forty miles distant. The city's location in the river valley makes for damp, misty, cold winters due to this exposure to the northern elements.

Springtime is similarly chill, damp and windy, with south-westerly rains lashing violet flowers at the base of the Beechwoods. A land inundated by rainfall produces plentiful greenery that is further fed by sluices carved through marshland. Skies obscured by clouds hold rain in suspension over pastures and marsh grass. Sparse copses are silent, save for wind dragging leaves from shuddering trees rent by contractions of an unstable water table beneath the soil.

To the south of Cambridge lies London. Across the heights of Essex once travelled by road, now rail; less than an hour away through woodland and forest.

To the south-west lies Grantchester, where fence posts strung with rusted wire enclose pastures. Herds of cattle lay serpentine trails through loamy flax fields bound by grids of carline thistle. By the River Cam's edge, framed against slow clouds, gnarled roots of willows twist deep into the chalk. Oak and ash trees with fallen boughs covered in moss score trails into the woods. Scattered hedges of bramble bush hem in deserted patches of bedstraw and snapdragon in the undergrowth. Violet bellflowers, vetch, scabious and poppies run rampant. Gales of wind cut through the woods, as slubby mud in ferrous veins churns underfoot. The land stands in silence.

Past Sheep's Green and across Fen Causeway, by the King's Mill and Laundress Green, the Cam feeds through the mill wheel and rushes into the Mill Pond, at a deep bend in the river. From here, the Upper Cam becomes the Lower Cam and drifts along the stretch of river known as the Backs, between the backs of the colleges and Queen's Road. The Cam swirls and eddies under the bridges of the colleges, their lawns and buildings stretching down to the river bank.

From the Backs, the turrets of King's College Chapel shadow the skyline. A landmark for hundreds of years, the chapel bears the portcullis

and rose of the Tudor Kings. A vast, eighty-foot vaulted fan roof, the largest in the world, looms over the whole. Below, the flagstones and steps are worn to a smooth slope by the countless feet that have walked on them, and cast their lot on destinations unknown.

At the centre of the nave, there is a superbly carved screen where an organ stands with a towering protrusion of golden pipes, garnished with herald angels with gold trumpets. Underneath, an arch leads to the dark-panelled choir stalls that ring the walnut pulpit. With no cathedral of its own, and an exception to the rule, Cambridge Town was granted the title of 'City' by dint of royal edict.

The formative tributaries of psychedelia can be found among the sylvan meadows at the Mill Pond. Here, Roger Barrett and others hung out playing songs for friends on idyllic after-school afternoons and at weekends. The Mill Pond is a touchstone for the dream-like evocations of childhood that stand at the heart of psychedelia. Barrett's songs called forth the infinity of space, with its multiplicity of unknown worlds amid the earthbound riverbank. A macrocosm within a microcosm.

At Grantchester Meadows, teenagers caroused in the grass, far from parental eyes. Sometimes, they would have drinks or ice cream in the tea gardens at the Orchard, under apple trees that exploded with blossoms in spring. By evening, pink clouds reflected in dark water, outlined by the blue sky, as swans and kingfishers glide by. Dry yellow stocks of corn herald the end of summer, as sunsets glow to crimson. Green grow the rushes at the riverbank, anchored in mud, with tall reeds swaying in the breeze, speaking silently of nature's implacable restlessness.

In the 14th century, Protestant students and dissident monks broke away from Catholic Oxford University and came to Cambridge. Their Protestantism is borne out in the architecture. Cambridge, a cold, stone-built, north-European town, had always been a busy thoroughfare with thriving ports and communities along its shores. The clunch and stone needed to build the Colleges of King's College Chapel was transported down the Cam waterways.

Beyond King's Bridge and Garret Hostel Lane is Clare, the oldest of the Cam's Bridges. Built in 1640, it has thirteen and seven-eighths stone balls decorating its span. The fourteenth ball has a segment chipped off in spite by an irate mason, vexed by being told his arches were off-centre.

Further down, the Bridge of Sighs, a miniature of that found in Venice, safeguards the Cam at St John's. Then, Magdalene Bridge, the original site of Roman and Saxon ports, where Pagan burial urns were discovered by a shocked angler.

The Cam snakes around the city, a stone mirage of medieval spires, carved corbels and granite archways. The river is bordered by trees that touch the ground to silhouette as the sun casts spectral shadows on gravel paths and cycle lanes. Squat, stone buildings are arranged along narrow closeted alleys. St John's Chapel tower, the 'wedding cake', and the University Library loom, but none stand taller than King's College Chapel. Symmetry, drafted by the Restoration architects, astounds, as oak-panelled doors, and mahogany-beam roof supports frame rooms where squeaking doors will always squeak.

In the Civil War, Oliver Cromwell garrisoned his army in King's Chapel. He did not break the beautiful stained glass windows made by Flemish master glaziers, as he was intent on keeping his men warm.

The bell tower of Great St Mary's rings out over King's Parade and Market Hill. Here, a carved granite arch dated 1273 stands, chipped at the corners by modern-day vans as they turn into Market Hill's narrow streets from butchers and bakers down Newnham Road. The cobbled Market Square, with neatly lined stalls under brightly coloured striped awnings, boasts local produce, hawked by East Anglian farmers. Their distinctive accent, a rhythm of long, stressed vowels, squared flat as the Fens, is a holdover from the Germanic Angles.

Fresh apples, oranges, raspberries in baskets, carrots stalks bound in twine, pickles, marigolds, bottled fruits and jams, sweets and buns, sit cheek by jowl with bric-à-brac and trinkets – curios, old boots, and second-hand books. Here, town and gown meet, one and alike. The central fountain an important meeting place in days gone by.

At bookshops tucked into alleyways, romantic poetry with gilt, marbled leaves crowds the shelves. An antique shop with scarred end tables holds cluttered tin ornaments in florid script that tells of old apothecaries and long-forgotten remedies.

Intricately wrought iron gates guard ivy-covered halls where undergraduates sit in wood-panelled rooms discussing logic and

literature. At Clare College Gardens, white Forget-me-nots are interspersed with kaleidoscopic red and yellow tulips.

At Christ's College Fellows' Garden, Milton's ghost paces eternally around a mulberry tree. Each college seems to have a ghost, often a peevish bedder or charlady. Sir Isaac Newton is rumoured to haunt his old rooms at Trinity where, from his window, above the gate, he ponders the proverbial apple tree. Clocks tick and stop when no one watches. Books fall open when no one looks. Laughter echoes from rooms that are never opened. Abbey House, at the corner of Beche Road, is said to be the single most haunted spot in Britain.

Under Silver Street Bridge, Scudamore's punts are stacked with tarpaulins. Daily, the flat-bottomed boats glide across the Cam propelled by bargepoles. Under the Mathematical Bridge at Queen's, built in 1749, currents push the punts farther down the lower Cam, stopping at Magdalene. Beyond this, Jesus Lock and a deeper stretch where houseboats hug the banks.

Wind rustles under bridges and fairy-ring mushrooms sprout at willows weeping by the banks. A lark spies an electric-blue dragonfly over the verdant lawns of Sidney Sussex College, as a toad croaks under a waterlogged broken oar, and caterpillars feed on water figwort.

Under towering trees, bike paths and rain gutters wind down to the water. Cool moss throngs on stone chairs. Lime-washed walls, porcelain washbasins, student quarters, with drab curtains and green glass lamps, lighten long, cold walks across town after dark, under bristling trees and through empty windswept streets.

All of these are signposts on the hidden map of Roger 'Syd' Barrett, who trod the alleys and pathways through the scholastic medieval town. Cambridge was home to three of the Pink Floyd; Barrett, David Gilmour, and Roger Waters – all raised in relative middle-class comfort. 'When I was a townie in Cambridge, I coveted those sports cars those rich undergraduates were driving round in,' Waters told the *Big Issue*. 'I wanted a Lotus Elite.'

Waters and Gilmour left and never came back, while Barrett returned to live out his days in Cambridge, seat of academia, an oasis and anomaly in East Anglia. 'The university is slightly misleading because it brings

tremendous vitality, crowds and bustle and multifaceted cultural action to the city,' explains David Gale. 'This tends to obscure that Cambridge would only be one-horse market town were it not for the university. Cambridge in the early sixties was still a hick town. London seemed exotic, despite only being an hour away by rail.'

'Because the university was there, there were always new students around at the beginning of term and the university dominated the town centre,' says O'Connell. 'The colleges were a wonder to look at, going on punts up and down the river.'

Wide open spaces, commons or 'pieces', ring the town, their mown grass scything into the landscape. Below Midsummer Common, plague victims are buried. In Elizabethan times, women accused of witchcraft were hung from gallows on Jesus Green. The verdant Parker's Piece separates off the City Centre and stretches out towards Romsey Town and East Road. Half way across, there is a tall lamppost with 'Reality Checkpoint' scratched into its paintwork. This is the no man's land of Cambridge. Behind are the college buildings and the town centre, ahead the Victorian terraces and housing estates.

Working-class estates set a geographic mile from the town centre might as well be a hundred figurative miles from the turreted university spires. This is the 'town' rather than the 'gown' district. The gown area extends in a one-mile radius from the chapel. When students are in residence, this part of Cambridge, like a corridor, belongs to those connected with the university.

Once, students knew too well not to cross the 'checkpoint' after dark on a Saturday, lest they be punched in the face by a 'townie' from the Romsey Estate. Besides the famed annual rowing races, 'grad-bashing' was also a tradition. 'We hadn't much to do with the university; there was a "town and gown" divide,' explains O'Connell. 'There was social tension. On Guy Fawkes Night, there was a tradition; town and gown would have a punch-up.'

Each 5 November, bonfires and fireworks marked Fawkes's bungled attempt to blow up Parliament. These often ended in drunken student celebrations in Market Square. In 1954, townies swooped on the square and set upon students with punches and kicks.

Students who attended the university merged into the upper class that runs Britain. Seniors sat at High Table in college dining halls sipping port. As one local dryly notes, ‘Cambridge is where the elite student fraternity push to the front of queues, act obnoxious, and think they are the first people to get arseholed by drinking more than two pints.’

Jenny Lesmoir-Gordon, a young woman from the town, had an upbringing greatly removed from the comforts of middle-class Hills Road, where Barrett was raised. Jenny recalls there being ‘a definite divide between town and gown. Because I hadn’t come from a privileged background, I saw things differently. I’m from a working-class background and went to a rough school. That was tough among the working classes; there was no post-war prosperity. A struggle growing up and we had little. In winter it was cold, there sometimes was no money to buy food and we had little to wear. No one had a car, for example. My mother was a “bedder” at the college; she made students’ beds. When I started going out with undergraduates it resulted in her having to leave the college. There was a huge divide, though on the other hand, that worked well. Cambridge was a lot smaller. Everyone knew one another, there was much more trust. Cambridge was still a small town where everyone rode bicycles.’

Back then, students had to be in college by 10:30pm. The ‘Bulldogs’, a university police who dressed in black gowns and bowler hats, chased them up before locking the gates. It was different for the town kids; they had the run of the place. ‘Cambridge in the fifties was a calm, sedate and homely place with coffee bars, bookshops, and students,’ recalls Jenny’s husband, Nigel Lesmoir-Gordon. ‘There were many brainy people, a rural setting, though full of minds dealing in physics and mathematics.’

David Gale was the son of one such brain. ‘I grew up in Cambridge. My father was a biochemist at the university. From the age of eleven, we lived in a house near to where Syd Barrett’s parents lived, a few hundred yards around the corner along Hills Road.’

Roger Keith Barrett was born on 6 January 1946 in a small semi-detached house at 60 Glisson Road, ‘Jesmond’ chiselled in stone over the door. Glisson Road was part of the ‘town’, though comfortable nonetheless.

Already a well-established family with three other children, Roger was delivered by a midwife in the middle of the coldest winter in decades. Another product of the post-war baby boom, he was born almost nine months after VJ Day, the outpouring of delirious joy after a war that claimed over eight hundred thousand British soldiers and civilians. His youngest sister Rosemary was born in 1947.

Analysis developed by linguist Michael A. Covington indicates that Roger made immediate and powerful connections between sky, snow and winds. His first word association was wind; windy snow and wind through the sky. As the unforgiving winter raged around his windows, wind whipped snow into twenty-foot drifts and the Cam froze for miles. Barrett peeked from his mother's arms at the world.

As soon as he could walk, Barrett toddled at the flood-swollen Mill Pond under the amused eye of his mother. A thunderbolt of infantile sensory connection linked 'trees', 'river', 'rain' and 'sand' in his young mind; words that would appear in equal dispersion across the length and breadth of his lyrical output. This profound connection with nature never left him. In his lyrics, the sky was a woman, and love was air. A delightful, cheerful toddler, Barrett woke smiling at the world.

England in the fifties anxiously retained its fading vestiges of Empire. On day trips to Cromer Pier the family rented a red-roofed beach hut. They sat by the frigid North Sea with trays of tea and sticky currant buns. On the wood plank pier sat a glass and steel pavilion that housed an amusement arcade with roll-a-penny stalls and candyfloss machines. The gypsy fortune-teller, a mechanical mannequin in glass box ringed with electric lights, scribbled handwritten fortunes for a few farthings. Vendors sold windmills on sticks and paper flags from far-flung British colonies in Pitcairn and Gibraltar for adorning sandcastles. As he trod the sand, traditional Punch and Judy puppet shows delighted Barrett, drawn to their anarchic festivity. 'My earliest memory of Roger is of him on a seaside holiday running in front of me, turning and looking back at me from between his legs and giggling,' Rosemary recalled.

The seashore made a profund impression on Roger. The moment he saw light strike the water, the diamond sun shining on the silver sea dazzled him. His world shone. The roots of Barrett's lyrical connections linking places, words and feelings are to be found in these experiences.

This imagistic meta-language gave scattered clues of how he interpreted the world. For Roger, ‘to see’ equalled ‘to know’. To know was to be, to know was to dream. In his mind, to think was to feel.

‘Love’ so closely correlated with ‘know’ as to form variants on the same feeling. With little division, he approached the world purely through his senses, open and receptive. Fiery food for the mind, Barrett appraised life purely through vision. When he was with you, he loved you. To know was to love, to love was to know – his wellspring. As sure as water streams from Hobson’s Conduit, Barrett loved knowledge he could comprehend by sight. ‘He would see and hear things no one else ever did,’ remembered Rosemary. ‘Colours were the thing. I wouldn’t be at all surprised if he had a condition like synaesthesia because a sound was a colour to him. If something were loud, he would say it was black and I knew what he meant because I’d grown up with him and was so close to him. Thinking about it now, to describe sounds as colours is unusual, but I understood.’

Synaesthesia refers to seeing sounds or hearing sights. In his variant, chromaesthesia, sound evoked colour. Words and numbers shone colours in Roger’s mind’s eye. To an unusual degree, his imagination was vivid, with a keen ability to absorb and recombine influences, however briefly observed. Even as a child, Barrett skimmed the surface of what was set before him, seizing upon what caught his eye.

For Roger, art came before music, and never left him. He liked drawing best of all. He showed talent for sketching early on, began to draw and paint at eighteen months old and never stopped. ‘People first realised there was something special about him when they saw his paintings as a child,’ said Rosemary. ‘He would do pencil drawings that were exceptional and he had what it took to draw what he saw. He was born with it.’

Stray images captured on walks were drawn with accuracy and skill. What caught Roger’s capricious fancy seeped into his sketchbooks. ‘As a child he did some very unusual caricatures of people in the family, they would have great big heads or be in some way amusing,’ Rosemary recalled.

By 1950, the Barrett family had moved to 183 Hills Road, further from the town and university in the nearby suburbs. The large double-fronted Victorian house stood back from the main road, with ivy running riot at the front and well-attended privy hedges lining a gravel driveway. At the back was a garden, where tall trees and shrubbery-lined paths and high retaining walls enclosed a gazebo. Inside were flock wallpaper and porcelain washbasins, with damask curtains and green glass lamps. Enamelled doorknobs with spidery cracks opened on large yet cosy rooms. In their happy home, the Barrett family valued literature, music and painting.

Touchstone of Roger's world, 183 Hills Road was grey and black outside, wooden and warm on the inside. His childhood toys harked back to Victoriana. He played with his Pollock's Toy Theatre, an elaborate painted cardboard box where he invented stories for puppets moved around a miniature stage by sticks and wires. Roger had little need for a script; the games he played were drawn from his own imagination. Poet Robert Graves wrote: 'The Romantic peers by chance into the toy theatre and finds a play already in progress. He records, not the plot, but the impression.' On other days he built trains with caterpillar hoods, or metal Spitfire aeroplanes and boats. With methodical concentration, Roger transformed the inanimate into life.

Barrett's childhood was not commonplace. His understanding and personality were exceptional. Roger absorbed varied influences with ease through remarkable insight that sprang from what seemed to be an inexhaustible fount. Sensitive to words and prosody, he rapidly built a syntactic skeleton structure, talking and counting before he walked.

Barrett's father, Doctor Arthur Max Barrett, Bachelor of Medicine and Surgery, Pembroke, was the morbid anatomist and pathologist at Addenbrooke's Hospital. Formal in manner, he was both kind and respected. Known as 'Max' to friends and family, Doctor Barrett was a brilliant, cultured man.

Born in Thaxted, Essex in 1909, Doctor Barrett's father, Arthur Samuel Barrett, conducted a retail business in the town. His mother Alice Mary (*née* Ashford) was daughter of Reverend Charles Ashford, a Congregational Minister. The doctor's maternal grandmother (*née* Ellen Garrett) was cousin of Elizabeth Garrett Anderson, the first woman to

achieve a medical qualification in Britain. Garrett remarked, ‘My strength lies in the extra daring which I have as family endowment. All Garretts have it.’

Doctor Barrett came up to Cambridge in 1927, with a scholarship to the County and then Pembroke College. He had an outstanding academic career, with first-class honours. Forming part of the University Rover Crew, Max ran a Wolf Cub Pack with Miss Winifred Heeps, whom he married. They planned expeditions and summer camps. Max was awarded the Scout’s Medal for Valour after rescuing a woman from the River Cam.

In 1938, he was appointed to the post of University Demonstrator in the Department of Pathology. Masterly demonstrations in the post-mortem room and intensive dedication combined with what colleagues described as a ‘serene good nature’. A man intensely dedicated to his work, contemporaries recalled Doctor Barrett as being meticulous, skilful, and above all, systematic.

An interest in botany led Doctor Barrett to spend his free time roaming the East Anglian countryside in search of wild flowers and birds. The good doctor’s hobbies were painting intricate watercolours of wild fungi and mushrooms he collected on Gog Magog Downs, and playing in the local philharmonic. Max and Winifred gained immense pleasure from the success of their five children. This happiness at home greatly sustained him.

Barrett’s mother, Winifred, was considered a remarkable woman. A friend of Roger’s recalls, ‘Winifred was a jolly no nonsense woman, bustling and busy. She was always baking wonderful Victoria sponges and making jam. Homely, she didn’t wear aprons though. She was ordinarily un-smartish. Not intimidating at all, and very nice.’

Barrett’s four brothers and sisters, Alan, Donald, Ruth, and Rosemary, indulged young Roger, a bright sparkling boy. Rosemary was his closest sibling in age and temperament and shared a bedroom with him. ‘We were five children and so different,’ she explained. ‘Ours was a house where we could do many things. We had so many interests. In every room was different music and different things happening. Our house was very happy.’

Barrett's father performed with the Cambridge Philarmonic, and was a pianist of considerable skill. David Gale recalls, 'Cambridge was full of eccentric men on bicycles in those days, who looked slightly out of time, though a community that supported eccentricity rather comfortably. Roger's father was a familiar figure cycling an upright bicycle on Hills Road. His mother was a jolly white-haired figure. He had two sisters and two brothers. His sister Rosemary was extremely jolly, the older one, less jolly, more contained. He had a curious elder brother who seemed pale, withdrawn, quiet and moody. Possibly he did not like us, though that was the impression I got.'

There were differences in temperament among the Barrett family. Although his father and elder siblings were quiet and reserved, his mother, Rosemary and Roger were more jovial. In adulthood, Roger gravitated towards the 'withdrawn, quiet and moody'. Rosemary remembers her father being consumed with his work, and like a father only on holidays, even then somewhat distant. 'He was there with us,' she said, 'but as if he was not there, but on another planet.'

Such remote parenting was the norm for middle-class fathers in post-war Britain. Rosemary subsequently asserted to biographers Watkinson and Anderson that her brother and father shared a 'unique closeness. If Roger said anything witty, our father would always be first to laugh.'

The two sides of the family presented a stable balance. 'Even when a child he always had a good sense of humour and was very sharp,' recalled Rosemary. 'If the atmosphere was thick and heavy for some reason, he would lighten it with a joke.'

'Syd came from a middle-class background, so they were well-off,' explains Nigel Lesmoir-Gordon. 'They were all big houses on Hills Road. By the time I knew Syd I never met the other siblings, besides Rosemary.'

While Roger was still in short pants, his elder siblings made their exit into the wider world. He and Rosemary had the run of spacious house and garden. Rosemary later observed that they were inseparable, 'like twins'. Roger recalled childhood birthdays with 'parties and games that you play in the dark, when someone hides and hits you with a cushion. We also used to dress up and go into the street and throw stones at passing cars.' Roger's parties were a smash with visiting brothers Alan

and Donald, who smiled as their puckish brother dashed through the house with sparklers, lighting up corridors in flickering light.

Winifred took ‘Rog and Roe’ to the children’s bathing spot on Snob’s Brook, a backwater off a small tributary at Coe Fen. There, the children learnt to swim, before graduating to Jesus Green outdoor lido, a hundred yards of river-fed water. Wooden bathing sheds by the riverbank, idyllic spots to idle away days sat on grass verges before a plunge into the icy water.

The River Cam was deeper then, and at Sheep’s Green’s bathing sheds, hardy Newnham Riverbank Club members climbed high diving boards for elaborate dives. Along green tussock sedge, quacking ducks echoed in cool swells beneath trees. Swallows perched on branches, water rats and moles scampered on the banks. Life had a measured rhythm.

‘With our father as kids we used to go to Byron’s Pool in Grantchester, a big pool and a wood, and [Roger] used to like going there,’ Rosemary explained to Simon Webb of the Syd Barrett Fund. ‘Any quiet, countryside areas around Cambridge he would enjoy.’

At the country’s oldest travelling funfair, Midsummer Fair, held on Cambridge’s Midsummer Common every June for over eight hundred years, lorries rolled in with fairground rides, tents, games and diversions. Assembled on the common, townspeople flocked to the fair. The Mayor of Cambridge opened proceedings, drove around in an open car and threw coins to children. Bertram Mills Circus also came, and entertained with clowns and jugglers, while Charley Baumann’s Bengal Tigers prowled in cages and a panatrope of fairground organs rang in the air.

A special treat was the Lyons ice cream stand, which also offered hot dogs with fried onions. Rog and Roe rode the Skid or Atomic Thriller below red-and-white-striped awnings. On the Octopus ride, bright with lights, cars mounted on mechanical arms spun on an axis. Arms rose and fell on hydraulics, and dipped and tilted to the children’s delight and terror. On tent flaps, suffused with lacquered paint, lurid murals were magic to impressionable children. They gazed awestruck at giant octopi smashing frigates to bits with tentacles, and sailors thrown pell-mell into the sea.

Music came into Roger's life early, with piano lessons at seven. Two weeks after they began he staged a rebellion, stamped his foot and that was that. He did appear, though, with Roe in a school recital at the Guildhall off Market Square. At this first stage appearance, the siblings took to the piano and played Johann Strauss's 'Blue Danube' waltz for their doting parents.

Barrett was brought up in a house where his father played the kind of classical waltzes that later peppered his own songs. 'Music was always played in our house because our father loved it and our elder brother had a jazz band,' recounted Rosemary.

Concerts by classical trios, quartets and orchestras punctuated the school year. Each Christmas Eve, King's College Boys Choir sang Nine Lessons and Carols that were broadcast throughout Britain on the wireless. Childhood friends recall sitting around an electric fire in Roger's room, singing Christmas carols regardless of the season. Barrett brought out the best in those around him with his open and warm nature. 'My mother's friends would come to the house to see him,' explained Rosemary. 'A witty, bright, attractive child, always making people laugh and everybody loved him. He had enormous presence and was always going to be something special. He had that sparkle.'

'Syd was very much a product of the English middle to upper middle-class university or cathedral town background,' observes Barry Miles, luminary of the sixties London underground scene. 'Syd was well-grounded in English children's literature and imagery of childhood was strong for him. He would have read nursery stories like *The Wind in the Willows, Rupert the Bear* and *Winnie the Pooh*; all the classic children's stories that tend to be middle-class. Syd was a very British product in that sense. Oddly enough, the Soft Machine were similar in that their background was in Canterbury. Canterbury and Cambridge were not that different. A strong middle-class background in those towns, where everyone was nice, nice, nice, and a nice way to grow up. Syd was much like that, with highly developed wit, and English eccentricity. Nothing too strange, whimsical and I imagine not that different from others.'

Barrett later mused in an absent manner, 'Fairytales are nice; a lot of it has to do with living in Cambridge, with nature and everything.' Fairytales formed him. Beatrix Potter was a smash at Hills Road, with

The Tale of Mr Jeremy Fisher being a favourite. Like Mr Jeremy Fisher, young Roger liked 'getting his feet wet; nobody ever scolded him, and he never caught a cold!' He could also be distracted easily. Once he forgot hot water running into the tub and roamed back to his room. A trickle down the stairs turned to a torrent. 'Mum says it will take a week for the boiler to heat any more water,' he ruefully wrote in a letter. 'Mum was very cross; she hit me, I cried.'

At Hills Road, Winifred read to the children from the 1942 *The Little Grey Men* by B.B. (Denys Watkins-Pitchford). Baldmoney, Sneezewort, Dodder, and Cloudberry, the last four gnomes in Britain, lived in an oak tree at Folly Brook. When Cloudberry disappeared, his siblings built a boat to paddle upstream and find him.

When Roger was seven, he travelled to North Wales with his family. In woods around misty Mount Snowdon, he went missing. All six Barretts, and a few chaps from the Forestry Service, set off to search for him. Who should come ambling down the path, surprised how frantic everyone was. Roger had wandered off and had not felt lost in the woods – everyone else did. Taking off without a word was a facet of Barrett's boundless curiosity. There was no telling what mischief he would get up to given half a chance.

One of Roger's favourite tales was Kenneth Grahame's 1908 *The Wind in the Willows,* which features the classically English adventures of Toad, Mole, Badger and Rat. Winifred also read the children bedtime stories from the 1918 compendium, *English Fairy Tales*, a book filled with evocative and slightly spooky colour plate illustrations by Arthur Rackham.

Roger's influences came from a normal upper-middle-class sensibility. Everyone from that background was brought up with what parents and schools inculcated into them – the classic children's literary education.

Barrett's powerful connection to nature set him apart from others brought up with the same books. His lyrics evoke the woods, fenlands and rivers of Cambridgeshire. Cows ambled on the green and horses cantered on macadam paths by the Cam, amid croaking frogs, scarecrows in fields, as field mice ran around on the ground.

The satirical witticisms of *Cautionary Tales for Children* by Hilaire Belloc, '*Designed for the Admonition of Children between the Ages of Eight and Fourteen Years'*, were morbid and rum allegories. Belloc's tale of 'Matilda, Who told Lies, and was Burned to Death' was one that Roger asked Winifred to read for him and Roe as a bedtime story. Barrett's bond to Winifred was close, and there was no question who was mother's favourite. Bright and precocious, demanding and petulant, Winifred doted on her youngest son. 'My mother spoiled him because she loved him much more than us,' Rosemary asserted. 'Roger asked for more, and the child who asks more gets more. They were very close.' There was always a slice of sponge cake in the kitchen when he came home from school.

In Rudyard Kipling's *Puck of Pook's Hill,* Puck, last of the People of the Hills and 'oldest thing in England', dovetailed well with the Piper in *The Wind in the Willows*. Barrett was absorbed with woodland sprites and shaggy half-man, half-goat Pan figures. Puckish himself, stories fired mischief in his lively eyes, brown flecked with green. In Lewis Carroll's twin tomes *Alice's Adventures Underground* and *Through the Looking Glass*, young Alice stepped through a mirror into a world of curious and curiouser creatures. *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* by C.S. Lewis stirred his imagination, as schoolchildren passed through a wardrobe to Narnia.

'He was always reading children's books, fascinated by the magical *Alice in Wonderland* side of things,' said Rosemary. 'The childish make-believe world was one he lived in always, so he made lyrics out of that. Fantasy was always more interesting to him than reality. Reality was always tricky and boring. He hadn't got a lot of time for reality!' Forever seeking a magic portal, fired by flights of fancy in his books, the line dividing fantasy and reality was a nebulous one. For Barrett, fantasy *was* reality.

At home, there was *The Cambridge Book of Poetry for Children*, edited by Kenneth Grahame, *Nursery Rhymes of England* by James Orchard Halliwell-Phillipps, and *Nursery Rhyme Book* by Andrew Lang. Roger also owned *Mother Goose or the Old Nursery Rhymes,* illustrated in delicate pastels by Kate Greenaway. Edward Lear's *Absolute Nonsense* and *Book of Limericks*, with its inspired wordplay and nonsensical

rhymes. Roger, like Lear and Carroll, would later favour stressed line endings, where stress falls on the last syllable. Winfred read, '*Far and few, far and few/ Are the lands where the Jumblies live/ Their heads are green, and their hands are blue/ And they went to sea in a sieve.'*

The erudite nonsense of these traditional English children's stories blends fantasy and sly surrealism. Gnomes, goblins, Hobbits, unicorns, Cheshire cats and hubble-bubble smoking caterpillars. Moles and toads walked, talked, and even drove motor cars. English in eccentricities and mannerisms, the animals wore waistcoats, carried pocket watches, smoked pipes, and were irritable and witty by turns. As Barrett grew, he reached up to higher shelves for *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy by J.R.R. Tolkien, with Middle Earth, wizard Gandalf and Hobbit Bilbo Baggins.

Television was a luxury in post-war Britain, though the Barrett house had a large black-and-white set with a tiny round screen. The BBC broadcast children's shows. Besides *Andy Pandy* and *The Woodentops* were *The Flowerpot Men* – puppets Bill and Ben lived out the back of a shed in a garden and spoke their own language, 'oddle-poddle'. A Little Weed lived between their flowerpots and cried 'wee-eed weee-eeed' whenever possible – a formative influence.

Mesmeric fantasy might have seemed preferable to Morley Memorial Junior School on Blinco Grove, a few dozen yards up Hills Road, which Roger attended in the early 1950s. Though he wept bitterly during his first week, classmate Alison Barraclough vividly recalled an eleven-year-old Barrett singing in Music and Movement class. Barrett, in short pants, stood before the class and sang, '*Cherry-ripe, ripe, ripe, I cry/ Full and fair ones; come and buy*.' 'There was always something special about Roger even then, his amazing imagination,' observed Barraclough.

When pupils were instructed to draw a hot day, classmates dashed off perfunctory sand-and-sea scenes, while young Barrett cheekily drew a girl on a beach in a bikini with an ice-lolly dripping on her.

After school, Roger and Alison walked home up Marshall Road, crouching in autumn leaves and rolling marbles in the gutter. 'We were mad about marbles. All of us had our own sets we kept in special marbles bags our mothers made. The last time we played marbles we were only eleven but would be going to different schools after holidays. There was

an air of finality about Syd when he turned to me and said, “These are for you.” He handed me what was probably the most treasured thing he had, that bag of marbles. I could not believe it. A beautiful set like that! No one ever gave their marbles away to anyone but Roger gave me his. Even as a little boy, he was extraordinary, beautiful. All the girls loved him but he always had a special sparkle in his eye for me.’

Rosemary said, ‘Very, very charismatic. As a child, he was a clown. Very attractive and exceptionally gifted. He always had loads and loads of friends, because he was such fun. Always laughing and always had a huge sparkle in his eyes.’

From nursery rhymes, Barrett adopted his curious phrasing, rhyming and meter, cadence and intonation. Interplay between words and melody in nursery rhymes made a profound impression at a tender age.

‘Sing a Song of Sixpence’, with its falling cadence and diatonic notes, was one. ‘Oranges and Lemons’ and ‘London Bridge is Falling Down’ also possess a certain melodic touch that later slotted into Barrett’s material, rife with the falling chromatic melodies that run through all his songs. All have a falling semitone interval, difficult to sing for adults, simple for children. For Barrett, rhyme, matching words with similar sounds in couplet verse, opened up a new world. All his best songs resonate with these formative connections.

Music-hall songs rang in Roger’s ears, culled from old seventy-eights he found at home. On a wind-up gramophone with brass bell, he put flat heavy shellac records and wound the handle. From the skating needle hummed a hiss of crackling song. A quintessential English form; satirical, humorous, risqué music-hall tunes remained ingrained in British culture long after its heyday. Songs performed in character saw ‘Champagne Charlie’, the London swell, living the high life. Lowbrow music-hall tunes celebrated wine, women and song; the Victorian version of sex, drugs and rock’n’roll. Cross-dressing, part of the firmament of English culture, saw female and male impersonators enjoy stardom in music halls.

Musical acts were supported by clowns and jugglers, acrobats and trick cyclists. Famed ‘Queen of the Music Hall’ Marie Lloyd fluttered a sequin fan as she wagged hoop-skirted hips and sang ‘she’d never had

her ticket punched before' with saucy knowing winks, alongside energetic renditions of 'Every Little Movement Has a Meaning of Its Own'. The music halls enshrined a peculiarly English humour favouring wordplay, innuendo and *double entendre.*

Barrett songs like 'Here I Go' display ample affection for these sounds. Dance-hall favourites from the twenties and thirties by Billy Cotton and his London Savannah Band were songs from his parents' youth. English dance bands toured ballrooms countrywide with brass, banjos, stand-up bass and snare drum. Barrett's Pink Floyd often played those same ballrooms, the faded remnants of a bygone era.

There was also roller-skating at yellow-brick Corn Exchange on Wheeler Street on Friday nights for half a crown. The Regal, a single-screen cinema on St Andrew's Street, ran 'the minors' for kids on Saturday mornings. They screened westerns and cartoons for a rowdy audience. The Regal ran matinees or epics *Ben Hur* and *El Cid,* which Barrett and friends trooped off to watch.

Walt Disney's *Fantasia* made a strong impression, with its dancing hippopotami and ostriches in tutus. The film provided Roger with an early exposure to Igor Stravinsky's 'The Rite of Spring', with a discordant bassoon opening a tone poem on creation. Tchaikovsky's hypnotic 'Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy', with jangling celeste blended with lilting clarinet and plucked string pizzicatos. Amazed at how they were used, they crept into his later improvisations.

When he was nine or ten, Roger progressed to comic books. From comics like *The Beezer,* he was enthralled by 'The Iron Eaters', sponges from space that ate iron. His *Eagle* comics featured intrepid space swashbuckler Dan Dare, 'pilot of the future', battling the dreaded lime-green-skinned Mekon, wicked ruler of Venus. An adaptation of the strip was also dramatised seven times a week on Radio Luxembourg.

Barrett sat on the floor at Hills Road and followed Dan Dare and sidekick Digby as 'Operation Saturn' ran in serial. Flying figures in uniform, they plummeted toward Saturn's moon, Titan. Digby exclaimed in mortal terror, '*Water, sir! Nowt but water!'* Another Dan Dare comic involved the Wandering World, a nomad space city last seen in 'sub-light transit away from the Solar System' and refusing all contact. Roger went through a phase of drawing strip cartoons about heroes he'd made up. In

this, he refers to Dan Dare, singing about the frightening icy seas of Jupiter and Saturn.

Another favourite was *Journey into Space* on BBC radio. Operation Luna told of misadventures of the first moon landing crew: Captain 'Jet' Morgan, Canadian 'Doc' Matthews, Australian engineer 'Mitch' Mitchell and Cockney radio operator 'Lemmy' Barnet saved the world from Martian invasion in distant 1971. 'BBC presents… Jet Morgan in… *Journey into Space*!' As a rocket took off (actually a jet at Heathrow Airport), followed by ascending tone (a thermionic valve through the BBC's echo chamber), eerie clavioline by Van Phillips in the background.

Over Christmas and New Year 1958-59, he watched the popular television science fiction show *Quatermass*, in which Professor Bernard Quatermass saved the earth from alien invasion. Singularly horrifying to a generation, an alien object dug up at a building site in London had terrible effects on whoever came into contact with it, even Quatermass.

On a lighter note, Roger loved the *The Goon Show* – a long-running series of comedy radio routines where Harry Secombe, Peter Sellers and Spike Milligan improvised with abandon, using sound effects, nonsense and vocal tricks to construct a subtle satire on British culture.

Sellers solemnly intoned, 'Feathered non-saxophone-playing Senapati tribesmen have been sweeping down from date fields of Northern Waziristan… The reason for these destructive raids was an attempt to capture and imprison the recipe for the Great International Christmas Pudding!' The Goons' obsession with accents and wordplay electrified radio. Barrett knew what surrealism was; he had ample evidence from the Goons, which he incorporated into his own off-kilter humour. On Sunday mornings, the mildly ribald *Round the Horne* followed *The Goon Show*, whose nonsensical exchanges and twist endings delighted Barrett.

> Charles: 'I know.'
> Fiona: 'I know you know.'
> Charles: 'I know you know I know.'
> Fiona: 'Yes, I know.'

Roger Waters first met Barrett at a Saturday-morning art class taught by his schoolteacher mother Mary at Homerton College on Hills Road.

Waters lived around the corner on Rock Road. Barrett was six and Waters eight. Barrett's parents were friends with Mary Waters, though their sons did not become friends until their teenage years. When Waters was five months old, his father was killed in World War Two. Waters said that this formed his outlook on life, and left him with much anger and hurt.

'The house Roger Waters lived in on Rock Road was not all that big,' explained Seamus O'Connell. 'Mary had to bring up these two boys on her own. Mary Waters's attitudes were progressive; she was big in local politics, an energetic and remarkable woman.' Though his mother taught art, Waters complained that Mary did not encourage his creativity: 'No interest in music and art, only politics. I did not have a happy childhood.'

Waters attended the highly competitive state-funded Cambridge and County School for Boys, 'the County', at a red-Suffolk-brick building on Hills Road. He was miserable there, save for physical education. He and teammates Rado 'Bob' Klose and Storm Thorgerson all played for the cricket team. The uniform was strict; navy-blue blazer, caps and school tie. All the boys were addressed by surname, with added initial when needed. Masters barked at, berated, and caned pupils.

However, one inspirational teacher was Denis Fielder, Director of Music. He told pupils, one of whom was soon to be Barrett, 'Music is never notes on a page. Any composer who tells you so is hiding something. Always ask what the composer is trying to tell you. Whether about himself or the world he lives in.'

Waters said, 'I was considered a complete twat at almost everything, particularly English. Most teachers were absolute swine, only concerned with university entrance. I hated it, apart from games, which I loved. You bloody well did as you were told and kept your mouth shut. School was an "us and them" confrontation. A few friends and I formed a rather violent, revolutionary clique. I enjoyed the violence of smashing up school property; organized clandestine property violence against the school, with bombs, though nobody ever got hurt.' Even at school, Waters had conflicting motivations; resisting authority though wanting to lead, inflicting damage though restrained by humanitarianism – anger and empathy in equal measure.

In 1957, as Waters bombed the school, Barrett arrived at the County. 'I had a very straightforward life,' he observed. 'I went to a school just

over the road.' Barrett enjoyed school, was popular and became recognised as an intelligent, though lackadaisical student. Subsequently recalled as a distinguished old boy of the school, he was regarded as an artist of promise. 'Syd went to the County, so he had a lot of intellect on him,' remembered his friend John Watkins. 'He read many books and educated himself.'

Precocious, Barrett was often annoyed with tedious geography lessons and became disruptive, though with such wit that teachers often excused his cheekiness. A harlequin who used cleverness and trickery to outwit his betters, Barrett had charisma and offhand brilliance. When he chose to engage his intellect, he met with success, shining in art. Despite having little interest in athletics, he was a good long-distance runner and always ran topless or barefoot; the fastest sprinter in the whole school, nobody could beat him. His hair was longer than anyone at the County and he wore it combed in a fringe before the Beatles adopted the style.

Pink Floyd album-cover designer Storm Thorgerson was in the year above Barrett. Tim Renwick, from Pink Floyd's touring band, two years below: 'They were older than me, though I remember them clearly; they were very cool. Roger made history refusing to join the cadet force, a rebel. Syd was my patrol leader in the Scouts. An impressive and charismatic bloke, as was Roger.'

The Seventh Cambridge Boy Scouts was all pupils from the County. Barrett's Wolf Cub pack met at a Scout Hut on Perne Road to set out on camping trips and night hikes in the Norfolk Broads. In his 1908 manual, *Scouting for Boys,* Scouts' founder Robert Baden-Powell wrote, 'Hills and trees, and birds and beasts, and sea and rivers… all this brings health and happiness such as you can never get among bricks and smoke of the town.' Barrett took those words to heart. He had relentless energy and pranksterish good fun as he took to the hills and woods with the Scouts. Wrapping a blanket around his head, he declared himself Tutankhamun's mummy, and twanged away on his banjo, using a sash from his mother's curtains as a strap.

'Barrett and I were about the same age, with only a few months between,' recalled classmate Don Leighton. 'It was usual to congregate in Drummer Street bus station after school, before departing for home. A girl infatuated with him, much to my annoyance, introduced me! The

kind of guy who attracted girls effortlessly. I remember vividly one conversation we had – what we were going to do after we left school. His reply was surprising. He was going to become a solicitor's clerk. Yes, I did hear correctly. That was delivered without irony. In hindsight I'd say he had to be pulling my leg!'

Another close friend at the County was the late Paul Charrier. 'Paul was at school with him and a huge influence on Syd,' recounts Jenny Lesmoir-Gordon. 'They were good friends; Paul was a little bit younger but a very strong character. Paul was such a wild person. He had long, curly blonde hair that stood up, and these little glasses. He'd ride his cycle singing at the top of his voice around Cambridge.'

'Paul was a remarkable young man, a person of tremendous energy and exuberance,' notes David Gale. 'Paul lived, as it happened, between Syd and me. The three of us would often hang out and have an uproarious time. Paul was outrageous and amusing, kindly, ultimately serious and spiritually inclined.'

Charrier was notorious for his pranks – once setting fire to a stuffy patron's newspaper at the Kenya coffee house. He also encouraged Barrett's extrovert nature, and the pair became rumbustious mischief-makers, bunking off school to scamper around nearby railway tracks, or race bikes by the Cam, ringing bells madly.

Past the Perse on Hills Road, underneath Long Road, was the Cut. Gravel walks ran beneath a bridge where couples kissed and third-formers smoked with school ties loosened, laughing at jokes without punch lines beneath horse chestnut trees with knotty trunks. Roger and Paul skylarked to chalk pits in a disused quarry at Cherry Hinton. Up Cherry Hinton Road, past Cherry Hinton Hall, the soft marl chalk crumbled beneath their wheels. The two friends biked to the quarry in secrecy, picking through underbrush inches from the deep pits now filled with dark water, a dangerous thrill forbidden by parents.

At weekends, Barrett and Charrier cycled along the old Roman Road leading from Worts Causeway to Wandlebury, gazing through trees and navigating ancient ditches at Wandlebury Ring. Trees at angles on either side formed a dense, if eerie, vault of boughs and leaves. Along ancient defensive earthworks, they pushed cycles round the ring along the outer ditch. Like Tolkien's barrow-downs haunted by ancient spirits, a place of

dark magic. Racing up to the Gogs, cumulus clouds inched weightless across green-tilled fields. They sat in silence, the town in the distance below. With the sun low in the sky, humid air sent mirages shimmering into the distance, and turrets and spires seemed to levitate.

As spring gave way to autumn, they wandered farther afield, cycling along the old Roman Road to the Beechwoods, up the steep hill then down a wide track to Wandlebury Estate. The Beechwoods were planted on medieval plough terraces, where white helleborine orchids pushed up from dry chalk soil. When things went wrong, Barrett's final contribution to Pink Floyd was '(Down in the) Beechwoods'. The connection was clear; the Beechwoods were rest and refuge. Forever looking for a magic faraway tree in the enchanted wood, he half believed that one day he would find it. At dusk, they turned toward home, cycling the Roman Road, as a crystal blue star, high and light, trailed them home.

Barrett's talent for art expanded into music. In 1956, the skiffle craze took Britain by storm. After Lonnie Donegan's breakneck take on Leadbelly's 'Rock Island Line' hit the Top Ten on both sides of the Atlantic, thousands formed skiffle bands. All one needed was a guitar, mother's washboard, a tea-chest bass, snare drum and wire brushes. Roger's brother Alan formed a group, and Syd clamoured for an instrument. His parents indulged their youngest son's music making. 'We started on piano, and then tried Jew's harp and recorder,' remembers Rosemary. 'Then Syd got a ukulele, then a banjo and then a guitar. He loved the ukulele – oh, yes!'

'My first instrument, at a very tender age, was a ukulele,' confirmed Barrett, 'then, when I was eleven years old, my parents bought me a banjo. I'm not sure why, it seemed a good idea at the time. I picked it up in a second-hand shop and plunked away happily for about six months. Then I decided to get a guitar. The first one was a £12 Hofner acoustic which I kept for a year.'

The Hofner Congress, imported from Germany, was a standard-issue acoustic strung with steel strings. The bottom range model had plain maple laminates, two-piece maple veneer back, and tortoiseshell pick guard. Barrett treasured the instrument. 'I picked up playing guitar quickly,' the self-taught Barrett noted. 'I learned to play it from tutor

books and from friends who could play a little.'American folk singer Pete Seeger's *Folksinger's Guitar Guide* album taught how to tune the instrument and worked up through blues, flamenco, and the rumba.

American rock'n'roll mixed black rhythm-and-blues and white country-and-western. 'Rock Around the Clock' by Bill Haley and the Comets topped the charts. American rockabilly Charlie Gracie sold out London's Palladium and scored Top Ten hits with 'Fabulous' and 'Wandering Eyes'.

Dismissed as another fad, rock'n'roll lasted beyond all expectation. Adults regarded the swivelling Elvis Presley, gospel-shrieking Little Richard and duck-walking Chuck Berry with derisive laughter that masked outright suspicion. The teds, Britain's first youth cult, dressed in an approximation of Edwardian English style mixed with loud American rock'n'roll attitude and tore up seats in ballrooms when Haley toured England. David Gale was twelve when he bought 'Rock Around the Clock'. 'We grew up with Elvis and weird austerity of the fifties, and rode that rock'n'roll strand. Rock'n'roll was tremendously comforting and reassuring. A solidarity-creating thing that ran through our lives.'

The British Broadcasting Corporation rarely played rock'n'roll on the radio. The BBC pumped bland tea-dance music by session musicians on the *Light Programme.* With no other radio stations in Britain, the BBC held a monopoly on the airwaves. Plummy-voiced announcers intoned the Shipping Forecast and commented on tedious parliamentary debates.

Though British record labels EMI, Philips, Decca and Pye issued up to five hundred singles a year, they received no airtime on the Beeb: the *Midday Spin, Family Favourites* on Sunday, or the much-derided *Housewives' Choice*. Novelty numbers, lectures, news or arch radio plays filled daily programming. Bland chart-topping balladeers Doris Day and Pat Boone filled the airwaves, or else oddities like the absurd 'Rock'n'Roll Waltz' by Kay Starr and the Hugo Winterhalter Orchestra.

English teenagers tuned to American Armed Forces Network, or turned dials to 208 on medium wave for Radio Luxembourg, beaming north from the Continent. 'Radio Luxembourg came and went, fading in and out.' recalls Nigel Lesmoir-Gordon. 'One just got used to the weak signal.' Luxembourg broadcast from 7:00pm until 3:00am, and youngsters huddled under their bedcovers, tuning dials. (The rumour was

you got better reception.) Falling asleep as Santo and Johnny's 'Sleep Walk' promised pleasant dreams.

'There were silly pop songs in England, so that was mostly American rock'n'roll we listened to,' adds Nigel. 'The first records that made an impact were "Heartbreak Hotel" by Elvis Presley and "Rock Around the Clock" by Bill Haley and the Comets, which my mother had a copy of, and "Shake, Rattle and Roll", and "Wandering Eyes" by Charlie Gracie. There was also Vince Taylor, Chuck Berry and the Everly Brothers.'

Tinny sets blared hits by American rock'n'rollers such as Elvis Presley, Chuck Berry, and Eddie Cochran. Duane Eddy's album *The Twang's the Thang* stressed the eponymous sound by tuning the guitar down a half step. His 'Rebel Rouser' was a twanging affair *par excellence*. Link Wray and his Ray Men also hit in 1958 with moody instrumental 'Rumble', a mean rocker rife with tremolo power chords.

Luxembourg's Top Twenty chart show was such a success that the BBC launched *Pick of the Pops* in retaliation. Sales of guitars and records boomed. British rock records were tame copies of American source material. Cliff Richard began as a wan and pale Elvis imitator who in September 1958 hit charts with his watery cut, 'Move It'.

Richard mimed on television with pancake foundation and eyeliner, a shellacked pompadour crowning his head. The baby-faced Cliff wanly clasped hands over his crotch as cameras zoomed in. The first British rock'n'roll single, 'Move It' shot to Number Two in the charts.

With a band recruited from the 2i's coffee bar in Soho, Cliff and the Shadows went on tour. The Shadows' somewhat awkward-looking guitarist, Hank Marvin, played a fire-engine-red Fender Stratocaster with great fluidity, the first imported into England. The Shadows' dozen instrumental hits proved an inspiration. Peter Green, Eric Clapton and Pete Townshend all copied Marvin's echo-drenched solos. Barrett and Dave Gilmour spent hours playing along to Shadows' instrumentals like their Number One hit, 'Apache'. Damping strings slightly, Marvin picked and played through an echo unit.

'Beat bands', four-man rock combos, sprang up around Britain. British rockers Vince Taylor and the Playboys hit with 'Pledgin' My Love' backed with 'Brand New Cadillac', the latter an all-time classic.

‘Shakin’ All Over’ by Johnny Kidd & the Pirates was the first British rock hit that equalled America’s best. Released on EMI’s HMV label, the song’s recording engineer was Norman Smith, a subsequent Pink Floyd producer. From the start, engineers in British studios were pioneers, placing microphones extremely close to drums, directly injecting instruments into the mixing board, making acoustic guitars sound like thunderous electrics, wiring effects together from spare parts. Boffins developed atmospherics that gave recordings unique spaciousness. ‘Shakin’ All Over’ exemplified the paradoxical space and tension the British achieved by mixing limiters and reverb, an altogether different kettle of fish from the American model. Recorded in one take, ‘Shakin’ All Over’ was rife with the atmospheric tension typified by English rock.

In 1961, Johnny Kidd & the Pirates played at the Rex, a dilapidated cinema and ballroom at the north end of Cambridge. American soldiers came to see rocker Gene Vincent, or Acker Bilk and Ken Barber play trad jazz. The Everly Brothers also played under the vast curving white roof and art deco chandelier. Kidd bounded onstage in a lime-green suit with red shirt and eye patch, and sang of ‘quivers down the membranes’. He shook and shimmied with manic vigour when bands dressed in matched suits and did coordinated steps like the Shadows. The difference was akin to Wat Tyler’s ragtag marauders descending on the lock-stepping army of Richard II.

When the Pirates played on BBC’s next reluctant concession to youth, *Saturday Club,* they had a primitive tape echo on lead guitar and no rhythm guitar, fat five-string bass and bottom-heavy drums. Session man Joe Moretti, who played signature trebling guitar on Vince Taylor’s ‘Brand New Cadillac’ also played stinging guitar on ‘Shakin’ All Over’. Moretti’s spare, strained tremolo and reverb contained short, sharp rhythmic stabs, which Barrett did not miss. When Barrett’s colleagues favoured fat-toned Gibson guitars and Marshall amplifiers, he stayed true to the raw early British rock sound.

‘From thirteen or fourteen, I became aware of Syd,’ recalls David Gale. ‘I met Syd from knowing Storm, also at the County. I went to the Perse Preparatory School for Boys, where David Gilmour studied. The schools were three-quarters of a mile apart on Hills Road.’

Though pupils referred to one another as ‘Perse pigs’ and ‘County cunts’, real enmity was reserved for students from Leys School. ‘Those who went to the Perse and County merged, effortlessly,’ explains Nigel. ‘Even university undergraduates mixed in. It got fragmented for a while because many of us were sent away to public school away from Cambridge. A subset that went away had to come back and get into the swing of things. But Syd, David Gale, Andrew and Storm remained at day school in Cambridge.’

‘Syd was slightly younger,’ says Gale. ‘I knew him through people he knew at school, slightly older. Two years made a big difference at that age. Not until later did the two groups merge.’

Clive Welham, ‘Chas’, also attended the Perse, a private school. Welham and Barrett formed a band, Geoff Mott and the Mottoes. ‘There was Geoff Mott, Roger Barrett, and “Nobby” Clarke, another Perse boy,’ recalled Welham. ‘I met them at a party near the river. They’d got acoustic guitars and were strumming. I started picking up sticks and making noise. We were in the kitchen, away from the main party. They asked me if I played drums and I said, “Not really, but I’d love to.” They said, “Pop round because we’re getting a band together.”’ The lads convened at Barrett’s house on Sunday afternoons. ‘Mrs Barrett was very accommodating, a lovely lady, Syd’s mother. Upwards of thirty teenagers on a Sunday, all assembled drinking coffee.’

‘Barrett was very independent,’ John Watkins asserted. ‘His mother had a large boarding house and he would treat her as a member of staff! She brought tea in and he ordered her out the room – “Now woman, off you go!” A large front room was down to music and painting.’

The Barrett front room reverberated to the banshee howl of Buddy Holly’s ‘That’ll Be the Day’. Roger on rhythm guitar, Mick ‘Nobby’ Clarke on lead, ‘Chas’ Welham on drums, and Geoffrey Mottlow on guitar and vocals. Geoff was older, a rebel thrown out of the County. ‘The Mottoes were not a gigging band, more a rehearsal band, a fun band, people learning to play pop music,’ explained Welham. ‘I liked Rog Barrett,’ he added, ‘a nice, offbeat humour. A talented painter, a better painter than musician. His artistic make-up made him a creative musician, not a good guitarist. He flowed with ideas; rather offbeat, but pleasant, innocuous and not at all malicious.’ Roger always seemed

perched on the cusp of bursting out laughing, a perpetual precipice that his friends found engaging.

Roger began to play guitar in earnest. He showed technical skill tinkering with spare parts to build his own equipment. ‘At fifteen, I took a dramatic step forward, becoming the proud possessor of an electric guitar, with a small amplifier that I made myself,’ revealed Barrett. ‘And with this kit, which I fitted into a cabinet, I joined my first group, a local Cambridge group called Geoff Mott and the Mottoes, playing at parties and the like around my hometown of Cambridge. We did a lot of work at private parties. And some of our material was original, but mostly we stuck to Shadows’ instrumentals and a few American songs.’

Barrett called Geoff Mott ‘a great singer’. Mott, a retired teacher in London, returns the praise, saying, ‘Syd was not a bad rhythm guitarist. Nice to hear someone who could play as opposed to thumping around.’

‘When I joined Geoff Mott and the Mottoes, I splashed out on a Futurama 2,’ explained Roger. ‘At the time, I thought it was the end in guitars; fantastic design and all that.’ The Futurama 2, like most European electric guitars, was shoddy. American Fender and Gibson guitars were so expensive as to seem unobtainable. The Futurama came from Czechoslovakia. A smuggled Stratocaster provided its template. Billed as ‘The World’s Most Advanced Guitar’, it was perhaps the world’s worst guitar. A pain to keep in tune, its fibreglass neck bent in unbecoming ways. A crude but all-important tremolo bar for that lowdown surf sound, and twin pickups made up the shortfall. The Futurama 2 cost £25.

Each Saturday morning, Geoff and the Mottoes haunted Ken Stevens Music and Instruments at 35a Petty Cury, playing guitars until the proprietor chased them off. If it rained, they trooped over to look at instruments at Millers Music Centre (the second oldest in Britain), on Sidney Street. Concave, sloping glass windows overlooked basement record listening booths, where they browsed the shop’s remarkable stock of rock’n’roll, folk and blues records. 45-rpm singles cost 6/9d, and LPs were 32 shillings. There, Barrett picked up a mono 45-rpm EP on Pye International. *The Blues: Volume 1, Part 1,* which collated R&B tracks from Chicago label Chess. He sat at Hills Road, guitar in hand, and

picked along. Like so many in his generation, blues came as a thunderbolt from heavens above, or at least Chicago.

Syd's County classmate Warren Dosanjh recalls, 'On Saturday morning, everyone would meet downstairs as the first stop of the weekend. We would crowd into open standing booths to hear the latest pop records, occasionally even buying one.'

Sonny Boy Williamson's 'Don't Start Me to Talking', was followed by 'Just Make Love to Me' by the great Muddy Waters. Immersed in the grooves, Barrett flipped the vinyl disc and worked his way through 'Walkin' the Boogie' by John Lee Hooker and 'When the Lights Go Out' by Jimmy Witherspoon.

The next EP in the series featured 'Spoonful' by Howlin' Wolf, 'First Time I Met the Blues' by Buddy Guy, 'Hoochie Coochie Man' by Muddy Waters and 'Juke' by Little Walter & His Night Cats. The two discs proved an excellent introduction to the blues. Howlin' Wolf's 'Smokestack Lightning' became a lifelong favourite, with the elastic sting of guitarist Hubert Sumlin stirring Roger's taste for trebly leads. From there, it was off to each other's houses to listen to Snooks Eaglin or Lightnin' Hopkins, or whatever records anyone happened to have.

Barrett's friend John Gordon recalled, 'When we were struggling and learning to play guitar, he somehow got rare American imports, obscure stuff, real basic Leadbelly-type blues, which as a fourteen-year-old was quite scary. Surrounded by American air bases, that's where those imports came from.' Roger got deep down into the country blues, Kansas Joe and Memphis Minnie, music from everywhere and nowhere at once, 'music of truth and reality', as the liner notes declared.

At Millers, Barrett found Bo Diddley. In October 1962, he picked up his single 'You Can't Judge a Book by Its Cover' backed with 'I Can Tell'. He was speechless. Outrageous guitarist Diddley filled two-bar measures with rippling tremolo, echo and *glissando* string scrapes. Diddley, an innovator in his own milieu, was such a misfit in fifties Chicago that local bluesmen asked if he was West Indian.

Born in the Mississippi Delta, Diddley moved to Chicago when he was six. He trained on violin, writing concertos and formulating his signature *glissandi*. A frustrated drummer, Diddley strummed guitar with

rhythmic urgency, augmented by heavy reverb. Hooking up with maracas player Jerome Green accentuated a Latin percussion flavour. His masterly 1955 debut 'Bo Diddley' and B-side 'I'm A Man' was an instant Number One on US R&B charts. (Diddley stated he never earned any royalties from parent label Chess.)

Diddley's 'two bits and a shave beat' typified his style. His penchant for tremolo, reverb, distortion and echo amplified it. Swiping strikes at guitar strings made for jittery, jangled rhythms. With Afro-punk frenzy 'Give Me a Break (Man)' underpinned by airtight rhythm, instrumentals 'Diddling' and 'Sad Sack' show Bo's experimental side, as trebly, off-kilter lead guitar skims over unrelenting drum and bass. His 'Moon Baby', about space travels 'long long ago', is an *early* example of space rock.

'Syd, Roger, and Storm were all at the same school,' explains Gale. 'They were all deeply into guitars and rock. An amateur guitarist, I had a Spanish guitar and Syd taught me chords. I have a piece of cardboard on which he'd written chords to "Oxford Town", which Bob Dylan sang as a protest song. Syd was very much into Bo Diddley and Roger Waters also. Roger lived a few hundred yards from Syd and we went round his house as well.'

'Roger Waters came to Mottoes dos on a Sunday afternoon on a beat-up old Matchless motorbike,' recounted Welham. 'He was friendly with Rog Barrett, keen on motorcycles then. I don't think he played a guitar, he was a mate.'

'Syd and I went through our most formative years together,' said Waters. 'Riding my motorbike, getting drunk, a little dope, flirting with girls. We had similar interests – rock'n'roll, danger, sex, and drugs – probably in that order. Heady times, a strong pseudo-intellectual but Beat vibe. That feeling pushed me toward being in a band.'

Accompanied by Barrett, Waters travelled to Paris carrying his guitar in a rucksack and played along the Seine. 'It hurt my fingers, and I found it much too hard; I couldn't handle it.' Song themes brewed in his head regardless.

'One night, drunk, we were having a race with a friend who owned a car. A famous roundabout outside Cambridge at the end of the Hauxton half-mile, ten miles out of town. We gave this guy a big start. Then Syd

and I climbed on my old Norton motorcycle. I drove as fast as I could to this roundabout and back. As we drove into the front drive of his mother's house, as he was getting off the back tire went *bang!* A puncture, a big split in the rear tyre. Only by a hair's breadth did Pink Floyd ever exist at all. Syd and I could so easily have been killed.

'Syd was extraordinarily creative and full of life,' explained Waters. 'I provided some push, though Syd provided initial spark. He showed me what was possible if you were prepared to take the risk.' Peter Jenner, Pink Floyd's manager, affirmed, 'Syd was the only person Roger has ever really liked and looked up to.'

Waters brought older, upper-class friends round to Barrett's house after school, among them Andrew Rawlinson and Bob Klose. They found him painting, paint below his easel, newspaper as a drop cloth and brushes on the windowsill. Painting and music ran in tandem, and Barrett was good at both. 'The initial desire to paint, or initial first successes at painting, [arose] out of a very genuine basic drive,' he observed. Barrett sketched, painted and wrote, his output prolific.

His room was off to the left walking in, with a cellar room below the kitchen at the back of the house, with a low ceiling and window looking over the garden. One friend recalls, 'Except you couldn't see the garden. The lawn banked away so you could only see tops of the trees, hedgerow and some sky. Quite light though, light enough for him to paint.'

On 16 May 1961, Barrett and Roger Waters took the train to see Gene Vincent play at the Gaumont State in Kilburn. The great first wave, black-leather-clad, American rock'n'roller limped from a grisly auto accident on an English road that killed fellow great Eddie Cochran. Fired by Vincent hiccupping 'Be-Bop-A-Lula', the two friends made plans to launch a band. 'On the train home, I sat with Syd making a drawing of all the equipment we thought we'd ever need, two Vox AC30s,' recounted Waters.

From this blueprint sprang Pink Floyd, and Gene Vincent inspired it all.

'Syd's girlfriend was Libby Gausden,' recalls David Gale. 'Very sexy with a great figure, a lot of fun to be with. I always imagined Syd and

Libby having dynamite sex at a time when the rest of us were rather more hard pressed.'

Gausden (now Chisman) said, 'Certainly I loved him, a loveable person. Very different; he never tied shoelaces and wore tight jeans. "Syd the Beat", a beatnik. Extraordinary. He wrote, acted in plays, painted, and wrote letters to everyone and to me every day. An incredible boy.' From June 1961 on, they were together for three years. Libby was struck by his idiosyncratic look: 'Shoes with no socks, shoes with no laces, false tan – yes! – sunglasses at all times.'

The same year, Welham brought David Gilmour, another Perse boy, to Barrett's front-room jam sessions. Gilmour, who'd been playing guitar for two years, was first inspired by the Everly Brothers. Barrett plunked his Hofner acoustic and David chimed in on a nylon-string Spanish guitar permanently borrowed from a neighbour. Almost the same age, Gilmour and Barrett became friends straight away. Roger's intelligence, wit and humour impressed Gilmour, as they worked out Eddie Cochran's 'Twenty Flight Rock'.

'David often came to our house when Roger was fifteen or sixteen,' Rosemary recounted. 'They had something in common since they were teenagers. My brother liked playing with David because in some respects they were alike.' Gilmour was quiet, shy, with a dry taciturn wit, and a bubbling sense of fun that friends recall with fondness.

'Syd was a truly magnetic personality,' said Gilmour. 'People would look at him in the street and say, "There's Syd Barrett," and he would only be fourteen.

'Not a single person did not like him, think he was brilliant, or certain he was going to be a success. Good-looking and fantastically talented at anything he cared to put his hand to. One of the funniest people I have ever come across – witty and surreal. Physically beautiful, witty, and funny; way he talked, way he walked. Much loved by pretty much everyone around him. A bright light on the scene, for sure. Most, including myself, had certain jealousies of what a bright light he appeared to be. Talented at art before he did guitar. In the early days, guitar was one of the few things I thought he was not good at, though he developed his own distinctive style.'

No fairytale is without tragedy. A month before Roger turned sixteen, on 11 December 1961, his beloved father died from cancer. Doctor Barrett was fifty-four. ‘Roger’s life would probably have been different if my father were still alive,’ asserted Rosemary. ‘Roger was fifteen when my Daddy died, difficult to lose such a big influence in your life, especially if you are sensitive. Hard for us all. We knew he was ill, though he was very ill for only a week. A big shock to us.’

Ever the inquisitive little sister, Rosemary crept into her brother’s room to peek through his journal. The journal lay in his desk, paints, brushes and pens scattered around. His elliptical scrawl filled every page save for 11 December 1961, blank except for: ‘Poor Dad died today.’ The next page picked up as though nothing had happened, filled top to bottom. Drawing a blank became his defence shield. Barrett kept his sorrow private. ‘I was around, but I do not recall Syd ever talking about his father’s death,’ observed Gale.

Hampered by reserve, Roger felt that he could turn to no one. A stiff lip in the face of misfortune was equated with strength, and unseemly emotion with weakness. At the Botanical Gardens, a stone’s throw from his house, he wandered throughout the Christmas holidays. The same gardens his father had painted in. A key to the private gate, and unbounded curiosity, were the doctor’s bequeaths to his youngest son.

Open since 1846, birches, alders, and hawthorn hedges lined the garden’s gravel walkways, bare in winter. Roger roamed a horseshoe-shaped lake where lotus and lilies awaited spring. Hobson’s Conduit watered a fountain in the centre, spouting water skyward. Skirting limestone strewn with shrubs, he made his way to the Victorian glasshouses.

Each housed plants, vines and small trees according to required temperature. A winter room with alpine lichens adjoined cocoa plants and liana vines in sweltering tropical heat. Barrett wandered from room to room, opened and closed doors, drifting from his father’s death. The deepening stirrings of a solitary nature took root.

‘Syd had a secret side you could never reach,’ said friend Tim Francis. His personality took on an introspection that saw him wander off on his own, a restless passion. Coat drawn tight against the chill, he walked briskly out of Bateman Street, hands in pockets, scarf wound tight.

Mizzle crept along Sheep's Green, shrouding weeping willows that reached down to touch the water.

Back in class, Barrett made a painting in pencil and oil on board where a woman clutches two children to her at the coliseum. Lions with bared teeth threaten to devour them. There was the sense of him, his sister and his mother being thrown to the lions.

Another painting shows a crude, angry jaw with ragged teeth set open-mouthed with distended eyes. Standing in the doorway at 183, Syd holds the painting, snarling, Barrett was man of the manor, more in bridled anger than sorrow.

As the school term got under way, Barrett went through a confused period, arguing that he did not want to attend university. Unable to concentrate on his studies, a real rebellion began. The balance between extrovert and introvert polarised. Outward behaviour became more outgoing, humour and pranks more pronounced. His father's death left a void. Barrett played guitar for hours in the garden. Eyes intent, he hunched over the instrument, focused, as Fats and the Chessmen's 'Big Ben Twist' hummed on his transistor radio. 'Syd was always a little odd,' says Nigel. 'Never an ordinary person.'

Barrett could also be given to the occasional tantrum that left friends marvelling at his theatrical flair. He would sometimes be an ass, as when he picked his nose and put snot in someone's beefburger at Storm's house. Barrett's humour hinted at his flippant view of social conventions, coupled with a true sense of anarchy. An audacious prankster, Jenny recalls that, 'At a party Syd picked up a plant and said, "Is this a rubber plant?" and bounced it! He was a freewheeling guy.'

Roger saw that rules were to be broken. Still, no one saw him as disturbed, just a mite eccentric.

Roger's first public gig came on 10 March 1962, when the Mottoes trooped to the Free Church Hall on Cherry Hinton Road. Barrett asked Waters to design a poster for his band's debut. Picking through 'Cops and Robbers' by Bo Diddley and 'Hi-Heel Sneakers' by Tommy Tucker, the show marked the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) march that took place earlier that day.

CND was a strong ingredient in British underground culture, organising annual marches to Aldermaston Airbase to protest against the placing of American nuclear weapons on British soil. These protests marked the first public gatherings of bohemians, activists and students. So strong was CND as rallying point for youth that their logo became recognised as the peace symbol.

On a high, curved brick wall on Sydney Street, faded white paint daubed by middle-class teenagers a generation ago still reads ‘Ban the Bomb’. Roger Waters and his petite blonde girlfriend Judith Trim were passionate about CND. At fifteen, Waters was chair of the Youth CND chapter.

Andrew Rawlinson and Paul Charrier hitchhiked to the Aldermaston March. Peter Wynne-Wilson, Pink Floyd’s lighting engineer, recalls, ‘I did much political stuff for CND, a strong influence. I was absorbed with the pacifist ethic and surprised when I went on the Aldermaston March in 1962. I met extremely aggressive political factions under that banner; interesting and exciting, but strange.’ Like many peace movements, angry people in the ranks vented personal bile in an impersonal way.

Despite a warm response at the CND rally, the Mottoes drifted apart. ‘For a couple of years, from the age of sixteen,’ said Barrett, ‘I was not with any regular group, and in this time I acquired a twelve-string guitar.’ Roger wrote his best songs on the 1963 Harmony Sovereign H1260 acoustic, bought for £12 at Millers. The guitar today hangs at Hard Rock Café in New Orleans, resonating with notes from faraway days.

Influenced as much by poetry as rock’n’roll, Barrett admired Romantic poets Shelley and Byron, and also the nature poet John Clare. Perhaps his first song was putting music to a James Joyce poem. In ‘Golden Hair’, culled from *Chamber Music*, a slim verse Joyce wrote in 1907, a troubadour yearns for a Rapunzel locked in a tower. With simple barré chords, Barrett conjured a solemn air akin to a medieval madrigal. Its cadence is pure plainsong, chanted words over bare chords, with the first of his thrilling downward octave leaps at the end.

From the outset, Barrett had an innate feel for conjuring moods. Chords were a vehicle for words, paramount in his estimation. He arced intonation and phrase to make melody fit lyrics, not the other way around. The word always came first. His singing followed the rhythmic

cadence of written word with keen intonation. Barrett compensated for his quavering baritone with shades of East Anglian inflection, a unique rhythm of long, stressed vowels.

No one sounds like Syd. A good bit of his magic lies in articulate phrasing, stressing tones over a melismatic drone. Sentences determined metre – at the end of the bar, he stopped singing. Barrett's deep absorption gave him the means to express emotion. Coupled with an extraordinary ear for melody, his songs became expressive. An early song, 'Matilda Mother', used Hilaire Belloc's *Cautionary Tales* as lyrics. Barrett used Belloc's 'Jim, Who Ran Away from His Nurse, and was Eaten by a Lion' verbatim:

> There was a boy whose name was Jim;
> His Friends were very good to him.
> They gave him Tea, and Cakes, and Jam,
> And slices of delicious Ham.

The black humour in Belloc horrifies as much as it delights, though to the English, irony and ambiguity are an adjunct to logic. What better tools to teach ethics than terror and curiosity? Belloc's stories are queasy delights, which after all, make for the best cautionary tales. Written in the post-Victorian era, his overt class-consciousness is less savoury, as is his xenophobia and racism. Children's literature encouraged conformity and obedience; affirmed rather than challenged social order. The call to adventure clashed with home and hearth – a paradox Barrett never resolved.

In the cold, wet spring of 1962, Barrett and Paul Charrier biked to the Perse to meet Storm Thorgerson, David Gale, Dave Henderson, John Davies, and Nick Sedgwick. Together they cycled to the Mill Pond in light-misted fog, until sun broke through the cloudbank.

'The Mill Pond, the place we met, was down by the River Cam, near the Silver Street Bridge, and close to a pub, the Anchor, was a mill,' says Gale. 'We went down to the mill, grassland on banks of the river, and sat and talked – earliest emerging "beatnik-ism" in Cambridge. In all the warm months, all these boys and girls hung out down by the mill and

coalesced into interest groups. The common interest was among boys and girls, but sub-groups became interested in beatnik matters.'

Sometimes they gathered at the bathing sheds near Sheep's Green on Coe Fen, lounging at the iron footbridge to the patch of scrub called Robinson Crusoe Island. Then they'd repair to the Mill Pond, to sit under the willows. Addressing one another in Beat vernacular – 'man' and 'chick' – they gambolled on the green. There was always an undergraduate to defraud into buying the underage drinkers a pint of beer. All the better to sip on grass down by the riverside. With bells pealing Evensong from King's Chapel, spring turned hot and thundery, with dark, warm days.

As punts lined the banks of Silver Street Bridge, Alan Styles tended to Tyrell's Boatyard, ('3/6 for punts, 3/- for canoes'). Each punt had its name painted in block letters inside the stern: 'Step to Heaven', 'French Hen', 'Harry Lime' and the unforgettable 'Diabolus in Musica'. Punting in summer, shirtless at the stern, boys in Levi's jeans manoeuvred the bargepole while girlfriends lounged barefoot on cushions, lazing days away in the early summer half term. A perverse delight, then as now, was watching tourists flip punts and flounder in the cold river.

Barrett's friend William Pryor has a clear memory of 'Syd sitting opposite me in a punt with his twelve-string guitar, playing a beguiling blues-tinged capriccio, as Andrew Rawlinson punted us through the wooded Cam behind Newnham nurses home towards Grantchester Meadows'.

2. THE MILL POND

‘He traversed the dark unseen, leaving the track of his song across the hush of the evening.’

The Crescent Moon
Rabindranath Tagore, 1913

After winning a scholarship, Barrett began a two-year programme at the Cambridgeshire College of Arts and Technology in autumn 1962. He had prepped beforehand in Saturday-morning art classes at Homerton College, then evening classes in life drawing at the Tech, as the college was dubbed. During the introductory courses, he demonstrated an encyclopaedic retention for dates, names and techniques. Syd drew and painted with ease, demonstrating a deft balance between shadow and light. He had a talent for portraits, though his subjects sometimes looked somewhat frozen. Best at quick drawings, Syd had a good feel for abstract art, creating bright canvases in red and blue.

His artwork surged. Never one to labour over creating, ideas came fast and fresh. He spent less time in school than the studio, often letting himself in at night. He joked to Libby, ‘A wretch goes to school with his paints in a sack, while all sleep and are not bothered.’ In his first year at the Tech, for a mosaic he dubbed ‘Two Warriors’ (the only mosaic he made), Syd cut-up and arranged glass pieces.

At college, a conviction that he was going to be a success seized Syd. Links between images, words and music flowed fast. Canvas in place, he painted in a system of sets and shapes. At times, he found the instructors’ criticisms difficult to accept, feeling they were governing what he was doing. Bored with lectures, he skipped school to wander Fitzwilliam Museum, spending afternoons amid antiquities from Egypt, Greece and Rome. At the Fitzwilliam, art historian William Shutes notes that Barrett was particularly taken with a self-portrait by painter Stanley Spencer, as

well as illustrations of *Paradise Regained* by visionary poet William Blake, studying them in silence for hours. Shutes notes, 'Barrett's awareness of traditions and styles is always as sure as his subversion of them.'

Channelling into his work were Franz Kline-like lines in India ink, among them an abstract he dubbed *London Taxi*. Black-and-white stripes radiated around triangles in obsessive contours. Syd had a short attention span when it came to anything outside his passions. When focused, his attention was powerful, though everything was interesting all at once. Music and painting captured his scattershot interest and allowed him to refine ideas through persistent effort.

Friends at the Tech included Stephen Pyle, who first met Syd at Homerton College's Saturday art lessons, and John Gordon, a classmate from the County days, who played rhythm guitar and painted. His circle included several young women who later figured in the Pink Floyd saga, among them Sue Kingsford, Gai Caron and Wendy Gair.

Barrett became as well-known at Cambridge Tech for his high spirits and pranks as he did for his work. 'Complete nutter! I mean that in the nicest possible way,' declared John Watkins to Mark Sturdy. 'Funny, excitable, high on everything, not drugs at that point, high on "being Syd". He was already calling himself Syd. Half the time I called him Roger to annoy him, which he totally ignored! A happy person, extrovert. A serious artist, and a good painter, no question. He did do much work – painting as opposed to sculpture or graphic design. Figurative, not abstract, he tended to use large canvases, three- or four-foot square. Very capable, he seemed to be opened up early. Maybe something to do with his dad dying.'

Stephen Pyle recalled that Syd's main interests were expressionist artist Chaim Soutine and surrealist painters Salvador Dali and James Ensor. Ensor's surreal party of clowns with skeletons cropped up in his artwork even thirty years later. His sister said, 'He didn't like Pablo Picasso, I would have thought he would have done since Picasso was very extreme and unusual, but he didn't find anything there to connect with.'

Lecturer Jasper Rose taught Barrett art history. 'Rose was eccentric, and used a slide show,' explains Watkins. 'We'd go into this large dark

room. Syd got everybody to go out the back window, through drapes drawn to keep light out, and come back in through the door. So all through this art history lesson, there were people coming in all the time, and going out the window again.'

At lunchtimes, Syd and Johnnie Gordon commandeered the common room in the cellar for impromptu guitar jams. 'Syd started these jam sessions – him and John Gordon because they were already into playing in bands,' explained Watkins. 'Syd gave me lessons in Beatles and Beach Boys stuff. Every lunchtime the whole art school would get involved. All covers, so anyone who came in could sing along.' Syd sat by the window in the common room, and sang the ragtime classic 'Shine'.

'Telstar', produced by maverick British producer Joe Meek, took the Tornados to Number One in Britain and America in September 1962, a surprise at a time when British music was a joke Stateside. A month later, the Beatles issued their first single, 'Love Me Do'. Syd was into the Liverpool quartet before anyone else.

In January 1963, the Beatles played 'Please Please Me' on TV's *Thank Your Lucky Stars,* and Syd was thunderstruck. Above all other influences, it was the Beatles who inspired Syd to write music. He played Beatles tunes to anyone who would listen, saying, 'Have you heard this?' He took to carrying their singles around to his friend's homes and dragging the needle on the Dansette record player right off Marty Wilde to put on 'She Loves You'.

The Beatles brought excitement and hope. They came to Cambridge in March, for a show at the Regal Cinema on St Andrew's Street, on a package tour with Chris Montez and Tommy Roe, exemplars of a generation they were about to replace.

Syd and his mates gate-crashed parties with guitars, or headed to the Anchor Pub, next to the bridge at Silver Street. A coffee bar in the cellar's wide veranda opened onto the River Cam. 'The Anchor was a pub and a coffee bar alongside to the lower river,' confirms David Gale. 'You could hire punts opposite the Silver Street Bridge. On the other side of the Mill Pond was the Mill itself. A crucial adolescent territory where boys and girls could stalk around, form little groups and look at each other.'

In summer, young people promenaded between the Old Mill Pub and the Anchor coffee bar. Laundress Lane connected Silver Street and Mill Lane. The Anchor Pub remains much the same today as when Syd was a teenager. Coffee was a long-standing tradition in Cambridge, since the Turk's Head coffee house opened in Trinity Lane in the bright Restoration, the second establishment in Britain to import the strong Turkish brew. At the International Club upstairs in the Tudor building, young men scoped out promising foreign language students.

The social landscape was enhanced by El Patio, the first Italian-style café in Cambridge, and the Kenya Coffee Company café at St Andrew's Street, which added a continental dash with its espresso machines. These were poles apart from Joe Lyons tea shop, with its milky tea and slightly stale bread. At the Kenya, future Monty Python members Graham Chapman and John Cleese worked out comedy routines for Footlights Review, while Syd's pal Iain 'Emo' Moore worked as a short order chef in the kitchen.

Moore was a 'townie', a working-class jack-the-lad who left school at fourteen, tired of being caned by masters and thrashed at home. His family lived at Darwin Drive, a shabby council estate on the north side of town. At fifteen, Emo was working in a coal yard at Station Road and became good friends with David Gilmour as a result of chance encounters on the bus home. Emo recalled Gilmour being fed up with his Perse school friends and looking to broaden his social circle.

Nigel and Jenny Lesmoir-Gordon smile as they recall how Emo got his nickname. When they first met him, he pronounced 'Iain Owen Moore' as 'Emo'. He artfully dodged his violent home life by wandering through Cambridge with friend Ian Carter, or 'Pip' – his middle name being Phillip. The pair zoomed around town on Vespas and motorbikes.

Pip, whom Emo described as the other half of his soul, yin to his yang, sold purple heart amphetamines to undergraduates. Chewing cheeks and talking so fast as to defy belief, Emo recalls that the part-gypsy Pip 'talked like a pirate, *looked* like a pirate'. Matthew Scurfield, in the engaging memoir *I Could Be Anyone*, recalls Pip as being 'surrounded by unrelenting intrigue' as he skulked about the Mill Pond pushing pills. Soon Scurfield was lifting pills from upper-middle-class

relations and trading them to Pip, a pint-and-pills subset down by the Mill.

At the Mill Pond, Emo astounded David Gale as he spun astonishing stories in the loudest possible voice and reduced listeners to helpless laughter. Often, Emo did not have to say a word, using physical contortions and pulling faces like Harpo Marx. Gale introduced Emo and Pip to his friends. Soon Emo, Pip and Emo's girlfriend Fizz (Frances Fitzgerald) became a close part of the gang. Adopted as court jesters, Emo and Pip were also the first townies most had befriended. Though new friends referred to themselves as middle-class, to Emo they were all posh.

'Emo was outrageous, irreverent, spontaneous, blasphemous, and incredibly funny,' insisted John Davies. 'His front teeth were missing and his dress sense was always truly original. Men encouraged him to greater and greater outrages and girls loved him.'

Emo nudged mates, muttering, 'Ummagumma make love to my girlfriend,' before racing away on his motorbike. He was also plainspoken. He had no qualms about freely offering charming imprecations ('Fuck off, you cunt!') in affectionate banter with more well-spoken mates. 'In East Anglia, farmer boys and town boys say, "Fuck off, yuh gant!"' explained Gale. 'The affectionate form sees an extra "you" added for emphasis but mysteriously transformed to "yew", as in, "Fuck off, yuh gant yew!" Emo would mutter, murmur, bellow it across streets, roar it up houses, and scream it across the Mill Pond at punting undergrads and gaggled tourists.'

Emo met Syd one evening at the Criterion Public House – known locally as 'the Cri' – and recognised him as an 'instant soul mate'. Struck by Syd's ambling presence, always in boots and jeans, Emo found Syd to be 'a shy, sweet, lovely guy – always laughing'.

Pip and Emo became guardians to Dave and Syd. Emo started visiting Syd's home, spending hours there. For his part, Syd opened up to Emo in a way he rarely did, confiding worries to his new friend. Emo had the rare quality of being totally non-judgemental and entirely blunt. Emo often nipped down to the shed in Syd's garden to catch a few hours' kip, much to the evident displeasure of Winifred. 'Syd was incredibly shy and didn't like to come out much,' Emo recalled. 'We'd lock ourselves in his

room and smoke our heads off.' Gregarious when he wanted to be, Barrett also could slink away and be detached.

On turning sixteen, the band of friends graduated from the coffee house to the pub for a pint of bitter or cider. When not haunting the Anchor or the Cri, they would be at the Eagle Public House on Bene't Street, where ancient oak beams support low-slung ceilings over tables with students' names carved into the wood. Empty wine barrels perched behind settles and stools, while framed Victorian prize sows hung incongruous next to genteel willowy women.

Each year the university held boat races during the early spring and summer, 'Lent Bumps' and 'May Bumps'. With eight rowers and a cox steering, each scull represented a different college. After May Bumps were May Balls, with marquees and banquet tables set up on college lawns – a drunken bacchanal where students celebrated the end of exams with enough port, wine, lager and whisky to sink a hundred punts.

Promenading the passageway between the Anchor and Mill, the Cambridge set were a loose confederation of friends. Groups, couples or individuals often gravitated towards the same places but did not always hang out together. Most people knew one another, as they were all brothers and sisters of others, or at the same schools. They did not all socialise constantly, but the unifying factor was smoking dope. Nigel and Jenny were very much part of the dope scene.

'Although some did go on to Cambridge University,' says David Gale, 'we were entirely town reared and not all came from academic families. Largely middle-class youths on a consciousness-expanding quest, significant numbers came from working-class backgrounds. A good class mix in our group, which Syd moved in and out of. A sprinkling of undergraduates brought big city culture.'

'Bob Dylan and Dave Van Ronk was what we listened to,' recalls Jenny. 'Then came the Rolling Stones and the Beatles. There also was much modern jazz and going to local jazz clubs. It started with coffee bars, everyone went to coffee bars like the Anchor but there was one pub we went to, the Criterion, the "in" pub. There was the Riverside Jazz Club, and the Rex. All the students went and they had modern jazz.'

Above Millers music shop, Cambridge University musicians and visiting Londoners played modern jazz on Friday nights. At the El Patio

coffee house, John Davies or Nigel tended the Gaggia espresso machine, and served hot brew in glass cups. Syd, Andrew Rawlinson or Storm hung out and discussed existential literature. Each expressed themselves regarding diverse subjects according to their respective abilities.

Will Pryor, Nick Sedgwick and Andrew discussed Dada abstract sound poetry, or thumbed through volumes by Tristan Tzara. GI's from American military bases nearby, a handful of Jamaican and Nigerian students from the university, and various townies rounded out the lot. A tiny buckling stage was set up for poetry or music in the back. Inevitably, someone brought an acoustic guitar and sang. Nigel and William erupted in impromptu odes from their *Contrasts* broadsheet.

The 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis sent a shock around the globe. For a fortnight in October, the world stood at the brink of potential annihilation, as the USSR and USA postured over their red buttons. Now, beneath frivolity was the shadow of the Bomb, but paradoxically, it brought a sense of good times to be had. Fast-burning hedonism radiated in all directions, another side to the mirror of doom that the H-bomb presented. Forward motion, powered by prosperity and youth, fed straight into the arts.

The Riverside Jazz Club was a weekly event in a room at the back of the Lion Hotel in Petty Cury, where Ralph 'Rick' Goodfellow ran informal jazz sessions. Regular Brian 'Freddy' Foskett played drums with the Percy Seeby Quintet. The house band was the Riverside Jazz Seven, whose double-bass player was Sid 'the Beat' Barrett. Freddy took Barrett along with him and this was when Roger decided to call himself 'Syd'.

At the club, teenagers got a taste of traditional New Orleans jazz, or 'trad'. Six-man combos, clad in straw boaters and cardigans like Mississippi riverboat jazzers, played clarinet, double bass, trombone, trumpet, and banjo. The Riverside Jazz Seven, or Riverside Jazz Band, also played Thursday nights at the YMCA in nearby Alexandra Street. A dark, dingy place, packed with everybody jiving and dancing the cushion-foot stomp to 'Steamboat Stomp' by Jelly Roll Morton and 'St James Infirmary'.

Syd's affection for novelty 1920s numbers and Dixieland-flavoured banjos, brushes on snare drums, and saxophones echoed in his music.

When ousted from Pink Floyd, Syd struggled to reconnect with trad jazz, an indication of the strength of these first impressions.

Poet Pete Brown says, ‘We all came out the trad jazz revival, or most did. We went to jazz clubs and they played traditional jazz. People recreated stuff from the 1920s, an antique atmosphere. Trad jazz got in the way of creativity, with people sidetracked into recreating something they had no part in creating. The trad jazz revival was conventional and static, and based on misapprehensions. People tried to play like Bunk Johnson, leading figure in the trad jazz revival, an old New Orleans musician they found. He had no teeth, so they bought him teeth. Ken Colyer in Britain copied a seventy-year-old with no teeth playing badly. I exaggerate, though it struck me as strange, even if it did create a good atmosphere.’

‘The Riverside Jazz Club was trad jazz, which we frowned on,’ recalls Jenny. ‘Modern jazz was more our scene; we listened to Ornette Coleman, Dizzy Gillespie and Miles Davis. Nigel did poetry jazz readings at the Rex and Guildhall.’

Above Millers music shop was a club they attended. At the Rex, the *New Departures* crew staged poetry jazz performances. By August 1963, Beat bands like David Gilmour’s Ramblers played and girls sat in the balcony upstairs to see which boys danced well and decided whom they would flirt with. John Gordon played rhythm guitar with Gilmour in the Ramblers at the Vic or the Rex.

At weekends, Cambridge buzzed with mod Vespa motor scooters and roaring rocker bikes. Teds, with their swinging chains and Edwardian drape coats, gave way to mods and rockers. Mods looked to America, France and Italy for sharp clothes, soul music and fast transport. Rockers were motorheads with BSA motorcycles, American rock’n’roll and black leather.

Saturday afternoons were spent shopping for clothes at the Alley boutique and Levi’s jeans from Aldiss & Sons. Like mods, Syd and friends wore Levi’s with Ben Sherman checked button-down shirts and Clarks desert boots from the Gentry clothes shop by the Vic or Stylebest on Regent Street. Snakeskin winkle-pickers, drainpipe jeans and short black leather jackets with lapels and vents were bought in London.

‘Jazz was his love and a certain amount of classical like Igor Stravinsky, but Thelonious Monk and Charlie Parker were the people he always admired,’ recalled Rosemary, ‘the only people that mattered to him – psychedelia was his version, much the same thing if you break it down.’

Monk’s piano improvisations had dynamic percussive attack interspersed with dramatic pauses, nicknamed ‘Melodious Thunk’. Monk, along with John Coltrane and Charles Mingus, formed a holy triumvirate regularly spun on hip Cambridge teens’ record players. Syd bought the 1962 album *Coltrane* by the John Coltrane Quartet. Musicians wore clean cut, sharp suits, brogues and skinny ties that British teens emulated.

Deeper still was the free jazz movement. Hip undergraduates at Cambridge University listened to Ornette Coleman, Eric Dolphy’s *Out to Lunch* and Albert Ayler. Free jazz brought the fire and anarchy of bebop into what was fast becoming cool and cerebral modern jazz. ‘People beginning to be exposed to jazz and blues did not know how to respond, and wore funny clothes,’ explains Pete Brown. ‘Fashion started to happen around music, at first self-conscious and weird. People wore duffle coats; women even wore sack dresses called “ooblies”, which lasted about five minutes. This stuff was happening even in the Fifties, the strangeness we came out of.’

Beats in Britain favoured rag-tag donkey jackets, boots and jeans, plain and ‘authentic’. Cambridge beatniks stood out from smartly-dressed undergraduates and elders in their tweed suits and worsted frocks. Atop the Cambridge Arts Theatre, local beatniks converged in the canteen, eating dreadful food, talking about CND, socialism, American Beat Generation poets and writers – Jack Kerouac, Allen Ginsberg, Gregory Corso, and, by association, William Burroughs. The Beats found receptive audience among them. ‘That was a pretty bohemian environment in Cambridge,’ says one friend, ‘laidback, tuned in, easy going – hip, if you like.’

Gale remembers Syd had no problems with fashion. Cardigan, velvet coat and paint drops on black Levi’s jeans and American loafers. William Pryor noted, ‘Authentic, beautiful, witty, musical and idiosyncratic – Syd embodied what we could all be.’

‘Syd was extremely handsome, well built and had a sunny, jolly, jovial disposition,’ says David Gale. ‘Well liked, women found him immensely attractive. Witty and interested in art and rock’n’roll, Syd was extremely striking. The clothes he wore when not in school uniform were extreme in the beatnik/bohemian iconography evolving. Syd had wraparound shades and extremely tight blue jeans you could not imagine possible to get a foot into, flecked with paint; authentic paint flakes. Syd had pale grey suede moccasins, fantastic objects. Even when we were young teenagers, in “getting the look”, or at least our interpretation, he got it absolutely right.’

The sooner one could get out of knitted pullovers and wool trousers the better. One insider recalls, ‘Clothes – you had to have jeans and T-shirts, which was staple. Mods liked European-style dress Fred Perry’s and jeans – only Levi’s, by the way. Rockers preferred leather and motorbikes. I do not recall any antagonism between them. The Tech and art-school students were more Beats. There was much cross-referencing and class did not drive this. You dressed to your personal aesthetic. True, this may have been driven by your musical tastes. Cambridge was eclectic.’

Young women wore straight hair long with low-cut fringes, emulating French chanteuse Françoise Hardy. Gone were days when women wore lamb’s-wool sweater dresses and twinsets, their hair lacquered and coiffed.

To Gale and others, Barrett embodied the bohemian spirit, loping across Midsummer Common humming a tune with a guitar under his arm, sketchbooks and cigarettes, clad in a black leather coat, black Levi’s and black polo neck sweater. This, when young men never left the house without a shirt and tie.

‘This made him look interesting to adolescents intoxicated by reading Jack Kerouac’s *On the Road*, and about to read William Burroughs’s *Naked Lunch*,’ recalls Gale. ‘Who were starting to take in interest in drugs they read about through American Beat literature. In my late teens, I had read Kerouac and discussed *On the Road* with Nigel, Storm and Syd.’

‘Beat literature was a trickle no one knew was coming until it arrived,’ says Nigel. ‘I read *On the Road* when I was sixteen and at

school. I knew I was in the "underground" from Kerouac onward, I always felt there. Not until *International Times* came along later did I realise I was part of the underground, and the underground was already there. We had regular readings of Jack Kerouac, Allen Ginsberg, Lawrence Ferlinghetti, Henry Miller, Samuel Beckett, and James Joyce. They influenced us when we wrote poetry. We got involved with *New Departures.* Mike Horovitz, Pete Brown and Will Pryor all did readings in Cambridge.'

'The Beat poets; a huge influence on me,' asserts Pete Brown. 'Later, having contact with them, I found most had feet of clay. Selfish, greedy people, who did not care much for anyone but themselves.'

Nigel organised poetry readings at the Horse and Groom Pub in King Street. Undergraduates, local Beats and the *New Departures* team took turns. 'Poet Christopher Logue had an album, *Words and Music*, so we moved away from straight poetry to include jazz and events,' explains Nigel. Syd and friends would often listen to Logue's spoken word and jazz *Red Bird* EP on Parlophone.

Pete Brown and Mike Horovitz hitched across Britain seeding bohemian scenes with poetry and jazz readings. They performed in coffee houses or university recreation rooms to small, enthusiastic groups. A thirst for ideas was evident, with poetry and jazz critical in developing the nascent underground counterculture. Brown and Horovitz struggled with technical disaster: 'Amplification was so terrible no one could hear, even quiet jazz drowned us out.'

A British post-Beat poetic movement was cooked up in *New Departures.* Edited by poet Michael Horovitz, the poetry and literature journal weaned a few Beats off the stuffy scholastic rags produced at publishing company Sherratt & Hughes, Trinity Street. *New Departures* transformed alternative publishing, kicking open the door for poetry magazines cranked out on school linotype machines. Like many Sixties art forms, new technology powered mass exposure.

Underground luminary Miles recalls, 'I met Michael Horovitz in Oxford. Michael was filled with great promise, and had a fantastic magazine, first to publish Burroughs in Britain. The first issue of *New Departures* had two episodes of William Burroughs's *Naked Lunch.* I was impressed. An English equivalent to the American *Evergreen*

Review, with the same focus. William Burroughs, John Cage, and the Living Theatre. The whole avant-garde scene was very new. I was pleased to meet Horovitz, an entry into a world avant-garde.'

Horovitz was risking prison by publishing Burroughs, banned in Britain for obscenity. A happening scene at Oxford saw pot-smoking parties and Beat poets crashing on undergraduate floors. Miles says Beat poet Allen Ginsberg's 1956 poem *Howl* 'absolutely knocked me out. I sent away for *Howl* for the title. I sent away for a City Lights catalogue. *On the Road* for 75 cents, *Howl* was a lot, a dollar. The titles sounded so great, different from anything I had ever heard about. They were astonishing. Lawrence Ferlinghetti wrote and gave me permission to republish Ginsberg and Gregory Corso in my art college magazine *Tree*.'

Syd was taken with Baudelaire's 1869 *Paris Spleen*, and fragments found their way into his poem 'Rooftop in a Thunderstorm Row Missing the Point'. Symbolist and Beat poems had a ready audience among the Cambridge crowd, who wanted to throw off the past, yet rebelled in a polite middle-class way. Seeds for an alternative culture were in place. When spring came after the extended post-war winter, blooms were colourful.

Peter Brown says, 'I first met Mike Horovitz at Beaulieu. We had this famous meeting in this tent in a field. We decided we liked the same things, would work together, go to Edinburgh Festival and do poetry readings. I had already sent poems to *New Departures*. We were interested in jazz and doing musical things with poetry. Not all of what we did was musical; bits were musical, in rhythmic sense, to recreate musical atmospheres. Sometimes we wrote about music, getting inside the music, what's happening inside. I hoped the atmosphere would be reflected. We felt, and still do, that music is the highest expression. I do. I would rather be a musician, happy singing and playing, than anything else. For a long time, I never had the guts to try.

'We were all into black music, culture, jazz and blues. Not widely available, and not easy to get what you wanted. Information was not always around about whom was good or interesting, or even who was who. We found out as best we could. There was little on the radio, nothing on television. In Britain, music was a luxury. It if comes and goes, it is not important, or if it changes, or somebody changes it and

wipes out a whole load of it, we felt it was a luxury. Also, the collector's mentality in Britain; everybody loves to collect. Valuable things do get documented. The collector's mentality does make for people getting stubborn and thinking one thing exists. These people do great work, create history and say, "This was important." Collectors were at work immediately.'

Says Miles: 'In art college I put on a *New Departures* mixed-media event. Painter Paul Francis did a huge abstract expressionist painting while Mike and Pete read poetry. Jazz musicians associated with *New Departures* and early line-ups of the Soft Machine jammed with them. Soft Machine's line-up was ever changing.'

Canterbury's Soft Machine developed parallel to Syd's Pink Floyd. As the Wilde Flowers, impromptu jams on saucepan lids formed the band the same summer that the Cambridge set coalesced around dope and guitars. Robert Wyatt on drums, Hugh Hopper on bass, Brian Hopper on guitar and saxophone, Mike Ratledge on piano and Kevin Ayers on vocals. Brothers Richard Sinclair on rhythm, and David Sinclair on keyboards, later formed the band Caravan. 'Soft Machine also came from an artistic and experimental place, Canterbury, deliberately questioning everything and changing things,' observes Brown.

True Beats were rare. Like the Three Magi, they tended to come from afar. By the time Australian Daevid Allen lodged at Robert Wyatt's mother's Georgian manse, he had tripped on psilocybin in Majorca, lived on a houseboat in the Seine studying Zen, and been visited by Will Pryor in Paris. Allen conducted Dream Machine experiments with Burroughs and Gysin in the squalid 'Beat Hotel' room he took over from the departing Ginsberg, and hooked up with intellectual teens in Canterbury to form the Wilde Flowers. Middle-class lads Kevin Ayers and Robert Wyatt were impressed that Allen had experienced what they had only read about in Kerouac.

At various times, Syd would record with all but Brian Hopper. In mid-1965, Ayers left for Ibiza with Daevid Allen, around the time Barrett and David Gilmour travelled to France. Parallel scenes in the two towns thrived on modern jazz, Dada and poetry.

The Cambridge set was comprised of myriad subsets, remarkable for diverse mingling among social classes. They were energised by reading

New Departures, Beat poets and listening to jazz and rock'n'roll. The set gathered force and numbers in late-afternoon hangouts at the Anchor, down by the Mill, or at people's flats. 'Somehow it all came together, an extraordinary time,' recalls Jenny. 'The first person I met was Matthew Scurfield. When I was sixteen, I met Nigel, Storm, David Henderson and David Gale. There was also Iain "Emo" Moore, John "Pip" Carter, Russell Page and Dave Gilmour. Dave, like Syd, was younger, so he came along later. Bill Barlow had two houses in Clarendon Street where everyone lived. Nigel had a room there, and Seamus O'Connell, Emo, Chris Case and Bryony Payne. Everyone would come around, also to Eden Street where Pete Downing and Anthony Stern lived.'

Syd walked across Parker's Piece to 27 Clarendon Street for uproarious times getting stoned and listening to Charlie Parker LPs in Johnnie Gordon's room, even though Johnnie didn't smoke. Aubrey 'Po' Powell soon got a room there. The Cambridge lot were in and out at all hours of the day and night. Or else they could repair to the nearby Clarendon Arms for a half of bitter, until the publican chased them out for being underage.

'That was a special group, like-minded and rebellious, creative and different, and lost,' observes Jenny. 'Even so, a new understanding everyone had. Everyone was unique; the coming together of a group who did not know what was going on. I hadn't a clue what was going on, though I assumed everyone else did. They were all like me, stumbling in the dark. I liked their minds, a nice way of looking at and questioning things.

'I was rebelling against boring adults, wanting to enjoy life. I knew I was different, questioning and rebelling against dull, boring adults that surrounded us. I don't know if we were all seeking the same things. My struggle was always to do with being lost and not knowing who or what I was. I was a seeker and artistic, but had done badly at school.'

'We were so affected by Jack Kerouac and post-war liberation. Imagine how we felt about our elders, says Nigel. 'We thought they were hopeless!'

'Folk and pop created a sensibility that predisposed us to read *On the Road*. Kerouac was an explosion,' declares Gale. 'We were all

schoolboys and girls, but *On the Road* crystallised something we wanted – to hitchhike, take drugs and be promiscuous.'

Hitchhiking in Britain meant Beats hit roads in summer to Liverpool, resort town St Ives in Cornwall, or London. In school term, to Oxford and Cambridge, wherever they could doss and do jazz-poetry gigs. 'People did not know how to fight the huge, monolithic "you cannot do anything artistic, get a job and work forever" mentality,' explains Brown. 'In those days, you got a job and you were in it for life, which was security. Everybody remembered the 1930s when the whole employment situation had fallen apart. Parents were worried on your behalf. They did strange things to make you do what they felt was secure. That was where all the phoniness came in, a great deal around.'

Pink Floyd's future manager Peter Jenner was an undergraduate at the university. Jenner and co-manager Andrew King came from an upper-middle-class background, and had graduated from the exclusive Westminster Public School. Stimulated by Kerouac and the blues, Jenner and King travelled to America for the traditional pre-university break abroad. Getting to America was expensive and difficult to arrange, though the pair travelled to Chicago to see Muddy Waters and Thelonious Monk in clubs on the rough South Side.

Steve Abrams, a young American on his way to Oxford, got them work at a beer factory. Back in Oxford, King returned the favour by throwing a party where Abrams first smoked dope with a visiting Nigel.

Jenner began studies in economics, with late-night cram sessions to John Coltrane, Muddy Waters and Charles Mingus. After smoking his first joint with medical student pal Sam Hutt, who later became physician to half London's underground scene, Jenner joined the Cambridge Jazz Club.

'Pete Brown was often there, a very good jazz society,' recalled Jenner. 'William Burroughs was around, a slightly mysterious force who floated around Cambridge. Ian Somerville, his boyfriend, was a link with American poets and Brion Gysin. Cut-ups were a big thing.'

Cambridge Beats, roaming bookshops, chattering away about *Naked Lunch*, may well have bumped into Burroughs. The technique of 'cut-ups' was influential, as word filtered down from *New Departures*. At the Beat Hotel, painter and writer Brion Gysin shredded newspaper with a

knife while working on artwork. Intrigued with new words in shreds at random, he showed Burroughs. Burroughs seized on cut-ups – radical reconfigurations, a literary cubism. Words from cut-up pages slotted in with dissociative drugs. One could argue that the cultural momentum the sixties sprang from was a cut-up.

Ian Somerville invented the Dream Machine at the Beat Hotel. Somerville wrote to Gysin, 'I have made a simple flicker machine. You look at it with your eyes shut and the flicker plays over your eyelids. Visions start with kaleidoscope colours on a plane in front of the eyes. After a while limitless patterns generated around me.'

Light shone from slots as the Dream Machine span on a turntable, eight to thirteen flickers per second pulsed in time with alpha brain waves. William Pryor, in his memoir *Survival of the Coolest*, recalled the Dream Machine Pete Downing built from an ancient gramophone: 'When light hits the retina at this frequency, either visual hallucinations of remarkable symmetry and purity of colour occur, or an epileptic fit is sparked off. The idea was to get nicely spaced with a joint or two and then sit for as long as one could.'

Barrett took part in similar experiments. Sensitive to flickering lights, Syd could snap into trances. 'Having met with Gysin and Ted Joans in Tangiers, I made a flicker machine in Cambridge,' explains Sam Hutt. 'I didn't know the future Floyd then. The dream machine, especially with dope, was hallucinatory, transcendental and definitely messed with the alpha waves.'

Winter 1962-63 was the coldest in forever, with bitter North Sea winds biting and snowbound drifts closing roads. The Cam froze and youngsters went ice-skating, navigating the thin ice. Snow shrouded the Cam to invisibility. The hardier among them ventured out to listen to music in booths at Millers. They congregated to discuss new ideas in music, art, politics, culture and religion spreading from the university. Direct rock'n'roll blended with intellectual trends in modern jazz and R&B.

Along with Emo, Barrett hung out at John Gordon's flat on Gwyder Street, down the road from the Tech. They screened impromptu light shows with a projector 'borrowed' from a classroom, slapping icing sugar

and other substances between glass slides. They laughed as they projected the resultant mess across the street into neighbours' windows at 3:00am. 'There was nobody else in the building, so we could make noise, experimenting with feedback, and rolling marbles up and down the strings,' remembered Gordon.

These early guitar experiments drew direct inspiration from John Cage and David Tudor's prepared piano on *Indeterminacy*. Metal objects inserted between strings created microtonal noises. Within limitations, Barrett's method drew from the avant-garde; his abstractions stirred by concrete poetry and cut-ups delved into at El Patio.

They would have read about, though probably not seen, American avant-garde films like Stan Brakhage's *Dog Man Star* and Kenneth Anger's *Scorpio Rising*. Barrett and chums went to late-night screenings at the Arts Cinema in Market Passage, across from the Criterion. The same cinema where philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein once sat in the front row and marvelled, 'It's like a shower bath!'

The Arts Cinema was the place to see foreign-language films well outside the mainstream – *The Silence* by Ingmar Bergman, *Jules et Jim* by François Truffaut, *Breathless* by Jean-Luc Goddard, and more obscure ones by Alfred Hitchcock. Syd accompanied Libby to see Roman Polanksi's *Knife in the Water* and subsequently employed cinematic detail in songs, spurred on by leftfield discoveries at the Arts Cinema.

Cambridge teens first smoked cannabis brought back in some enterprising soul's automobile – some say Pete Downing's – all the way from Morocco. The *Times* trumpeted 'Hemp in Piccadilly' and 'Big Increase in Marihuana'. Cannabis was £4 an ounce, or a 10-shilling silver piece for a matchbox full. William Pryor was instructed to hold a joint between his knuckles, as a jazz musician might. Stoned out their minds that spring, they fell like ninepins to sweet *cannabis sativa.*

They gravitated to the Cri, halfway down Market Passage in a red-and-yellow brick building with arched windows. Warren Dosanjh recalls that the large back bar was managed by Ken Hart, helped by the hulking Lennie and his 'controller' – a police baton. The Welsh landlord and landlady, Len and Flovie Thompson, had an abiding passion for folk music. Cannabis was rolled with tobacco into spliffs and smoked in the

back. Down narrow stairs, sawdust blanketed the floor in the large back bar. Cool kids sat tapping cigarettes into tobacco tin ashtrays, where Barrett hung out with Bob Klose and Charlie Weedon. Underage drinkers congregated at the nearby Wimpy hamburger bar, gathered courage and strolled into the Criterion for a Campari and soda.

The Cri was a popular meeting place for students from the university, the Tech and art school. Folk singer and Fitzwilliam student Nick Drake sat quietly in the corner. With such a large population of transient young people things changed from month to month.

On Saturdays, older teens drank a pint at the Cri before gravitating to the Victoria Cinema in Market Hill, where bands played in a ballroom above the cinema. The 'Vic' was central. Downstairs was the Still & Sugarloaf, a pub with twinkling neon sign where squaddies gathered. In the Oak Room, Bob Kidman and his Orchestra played for older folks. In the Vic's Blue Room local band Johnny Cullen and the Prowlers played. At a small club inside, Joker's Wild played Wednesday-night dances, dubbed *Les Jeux Interdits,* after a 1952 French film, in a bid to attract hip European language students. 'Jokers Wild played fortnightly at *Les Jeux Interdits*,' recalls Warren Dosanjh, 'and the Louis Pocrowski 7 alternated with them at Club Cavagnol. Both were names designed to be unappealing to the average local yob.'

The 'Dot' – Dorothy Ballroom on Hobson Street – was a three-storey ballroom. Crowds stormed up the brass-railed staircase to the aptly named Sweatbox, where frenetic teens danced. The twist had come into vogue. A few brave youths tried out the new steps, to disapproval from older teens. The twist, quaint as it might seem, brought freedom from strict steps and formality.

This was the time of R&B bands, and several good local bands played. Georgie Fame, Zoot Money, the Small Faces, and the Who all came through to play at the Rex. The Stones and the Beatles played at the Regal Cinema, whose ballroom doubled for bands and shows. On a Saturday night, there were dances at the Dot, the Rex, the Vic, Guildhall, and the Corn Exchange. On Sundays the Alley Club was the place to be; a small blues venue in Falcon Yard, situated along an alley off Petty Cury, whose galleried medieval streets and yards had been documented

by Samuel Pepys. Falcon Yard was where married poets Sylvia Plath and Ted Hughes first met.

On Sunday evenings, records were played at the Red Cow Pub. Dosanjh recalls drinking draught Merrydown cider mixed with Guinness in the upstairs room's jazz and blues gigs. Next to the Guildhall, it was a rough pub with a bad reputation. Regardless, they trooped down to the old Tudor-beamed building on Corn Exchange Street where the Blue River Boys played bluegrass.

At the Criterion, the Cambridge set mixed with university undergraduates, like John Hopkins, known as 'Hoppy', who was later to become a central figure in the London underground scene. 'Some people at the University we knew,' says Jenny, 'a boyfriend was friends with Sam Hutt, a link to Hoppy, who I first met when I was fifteen.'

'I knew several university students, but I got to know them because they were interesting young people,' recounts Seamus O'Connell. 'I was not into academic Cambridge at all. People like Storm and Po might have been less interested in the students; they might have been drawn to them for drugs they took. We went round to Syd's house very occasionally, but they were more into guitars and cannabis. I met my wife there. Several girls went knowing there were boys from our various groups. That was all great fun.'

Some Cambridge teenagers took to drugs seeking metaphysical inquisition. Others for reaching that great elixir rationed so long – *fun*. Drugs were nothing new to Cambridge, in the 1860s opium was so widespread in Cambridgeshire a farmhand nodding off at the till became a joke. Fenlanders brewed poppy tea to soothe cantankerous children.

The upper classes were no strangers to drugs either, from ether to nitrous oxide, opium to absinthe. (In 1925 the *Times* warned readers that hashish was surreptitiously mixed in with pipe tobacco.) Decadence, whether manifested in drugs or deviance, was considered *noblesse oblige* – the rights of those to whom laws did not apply. It is ironic, then, that drugs were one catalyst in a gradual weakening of the class system across the decade.

Speed trickled down from university undergraduates, who munched French blues with wild abandon while cramming for exams. Amphetamines were available at the local chemist over the counter until

the mods and rockers conflict in Brighton and Margate ushered in the Dangerous Drugs Act.

'Wild Ones "Beat Up" Margate' and 'Mod Dead in the Water', screamed the papers. With amphetamines removed from counters, and locked in cabinets, a running drugs battle between authorities and youth ensued. Not that availability changed much. 'There were a lot of drugs, speed was always around,' recalls Jenny.

Some went to the Dot or the Cri hopped up on Drinamyl tablets, known as 'purple hearts' for their distinctive shape and colour. A mixed amphetamine and barbiturate, an upper and a downer, purple hearts gave the user the odd sensation of being cool and wired. Off they went to the Criterion, their chatter doubled in volume and speed, making light-headed conversations on Beat literature, jazz, Dylan and the Beatles seem crucial.

Nigel made trips to score pot from Hoppy at his flat in London, bringing back weed on the train, having a puff on the platform as so few knew what it was. Pete Downing got a medical catalogue and ordered unscheduled drugs at random, which were duly popped in his room at Eden Street. This cavalier attitude to recreational pill popping caused many problems as the decade wore on.

Downing prevailed on Nigel to steal the *Pharmaceutical Codex* from a bookstore, a tome that required a suitcase to spirit it out the door. William Pryor recalled Downing's pocket contents: 'Rizla cigarette papers, weed wrapped in the *Times*, MIMS prescribing journal, Benzedrine inhalers, penknife, amphetamines, barbiturates and Mandrax.' Though Pete Downing was into Mandrax, a strong sleeping tablet, Syd did not try the drug until he was in London, nor did he take amphetamines.

'An interesting axis,' says Gale, 'was fifteen miles north-east of Cambridge. Mildenhall and Lakenheath were US Air Force bases from where American servicemen came in. Cambridge, for the servicemen, was the most interesting town in a rather bleak landscape. They would drive past Newmarket, the nearest town, and into Cambridge. They would go to the Criterion, a heavy pub. I found the Criterion intimidating, being a nice middle-class boy. Strange marginal types, and those who wished to be perceived as marginal, such as us middle-class

kids, hung out. Heavy guys from the town emerged from teddy-boy culture, and would-be beatniks who still lived at home with parents. Some genuine bohemians and servicemen from the USAF in civilian clothes, black and white. It took me several months to realise my black and white servicemen friends never spoke to one another. We did not notice that racism at first.

'The servicemen, besides bringing in cheap booze and cigarettes which we swapped records and money for, also brought drugs. The black guys, I believe – one root whereby Syd and I were exposed to drugs in the early sixties. Other adventurous individuals in the town had connections with Hoppy. Cannabis into the Fenlands came along those two axes, London and the USAF. Dope smoking became fashionable and desirable, and completely supplanted alcohol culture. It was considered uncool to drink. Those who drank were "beer heads" and we were "tea heads".'

Nigel says, 'Black airmen from US bases, who we were friends with, had American Pall Mall cigarettes and Levi's with buttons. They probably also first came with drugs. The first to give me a joint, ironically, Johnny Roach, was at Sydney Sussex College, opposite the coffee bar I worked in. He introduced me to cannabis, but the black guys brought it with them; they were all into smoking pot. They came from a completely different culture. We crossed barriers, though I suppose they were still there.'

At the Criterion, Syd got his prized stainless-steel Zippo lighter, standard-issue at the American base PX store; though a damned sight cooler than domestic Bryant & May matches. Barrett lit cigarettes and joints with a flourish. He flicked open the top and hit the starter in one go, which impressed his friends.

'Prevailing propaganda saw cannabis as a consciousness-expanding drug that would lead you to inner depths and reconnect you to a spirituality which you had become divorced from,' asserts Gale. 'Put you in touch with psychological insight. Enhance perception of sights, sounds, smells, taste, music, sex, *et cetera.* This was all popular and underway, indulged in on a nightly basis, at the house of Storm. Storm had a permissive, bohemian mother, unlike most of our conventionally strict parents.'

A network off Christ's Pieces framed Syd and friends' late-night wanderings. After the Criterion closed at 10:30pm, they strayed across Christ's Piece and upstairs to Storm's room. Storm lived with his mum Evangeline, or 'Vangie', a potter, at 19 Earl Street, around the corner from Clarendon Street. There, they lay across his bed, ate Weetabix, read Marvel comics, and listened to Jimmy Smith's *Back at the Chicken Shack* or Lightnin' Hopkins LPs – smoking joints all the while, until they began giggling helplessly. A drawing of old black army boots by Syd hung on a wall covered top to bottom with graffiti and collaged photographs from surrealist art and old magazines.

Storm developed his innate visual flair, which he and Aubrey 'Po' Powell turned into design team Hipgnosis. Storm, attracted to photography rather than drawing, tended toward 'the unlikely, unbelievable and unacceptable'.

Perse student John Davies said, 'We were all smoking by this time and there were stories around town the local drug squad had all the names and addresses. We made a vague resolution to be careful.' They did nothing of the sort.

Seamus O'Connell lived on Cherry Hinton Road. His mother Elena, or Ella, was a bohemian of the previous generation. Roger Waters and Andrew Rawlinson were his best friends, and the three enjoyed a good drink. Like Vangie, Ella tolerated youngsters running amok, with her house a refuge when Vangie ran them out. 'Although a progressive woman,' says O'Connell, 'Roger Waters's mother Mary would have regarded my mother as a disgrace. People were told they should not come out to my house at all.'

Ella dressed in gypsy robes and hennaed her hair; she amassed a sizeable library on the occult – tarot cards, astrology and esoteric books like Chinese oracle *I-Ching*. Syd erred toward the mystic, with a keen eye for the obscure and strange. He leafed through her books about Chinese game 'Go' and theosophist writer Madame Helena Petrovna Blavatsky. From Blavatsky, Syd grabbed her trademark phrase 'flapdoodle!', referring to spineless folk, for early song 'Flapdoodle Dealing'.

The lads got *The Dawn of Magic*, a seminal, if dubious, book. A compendium of every outlandish notion, Gale outlined its contents:

‘Lurid tales of Nazi mysticism, Fortean toads from the sky, pyramidology, the sex magic of Aleister Crowley, Gurdjieff, Atlantis and much anomalous else, all pitched to excite early counterculture’s rejection of depressant rationalism.’

‘We were all interested in hypnosis,’ recalls Gale. ‘We went into the cellar of Syd’s house. Will Pryor swung a watch in front of Anne McBey, Nigel’s girlfriend. She went into a trance and we could not get her out. We carried her upstairs through Syd’s house to a bedroom. Anne lay down and eventually came out of trance. These anecdotes reinforce the idea people were keen to examine consciousness from any angle, because Ouija board stuff was also going on. Ultimately, drugs were far more interesting.’

The restlessly questing Cambridge set sought answers wherever possible. Despite their existential pursuits, intellectual curiosity was balanced with levity. ‘Syd and I became firm friends,’ says David Gale. ‘At Christmas every year for two or three years, we worked at the post office on Mill Road as part-time Christmas postmen. Because we lived so close together, we cycled to the post office at 6:00am and then did our letter routes. We skived off home, hung about drinking tea in each other’s homes and then went back to the post office as if it had been a long busy morning. We called it “Going up the Royal”, Syd’s term, because we were going to work for the Royal Mail. He would say, “Off we go to the Royal!” An amiable pursuit.’

Afternoons were spent having bicycle races, speeding across Parker’s Piece in madcap chases to the riverbank. They rode Raleigh bicycles with baskets on the front, with rusted ringers chiming silver bells. With gears grinding up Trumpington Road and rubber tires flying down Long Road, breathless chases were ended by falling from bikes at boathouses next to Magdalene Bridge. ‘Syd was always very good company, always a laugh, very jolly,’ insists Gale. ‘I keep stressing that because he changed so much.’

In 1963, Gilmour joined Syd at Cambridge Tech to take A-levels in modern languages. With the Tech split in two, Gilmour studied in the Technology Department, and Barrett in Arts. At lunchtime, Gilmour made his way, guitar in hand, to the Arts Department. Large groups

gathered in the canteen or empty classrooms to play guitars and harmonicas.

‘We did a lot of learning together,’ said Gilmour. ‘We were friends first. Then we picked up guitars later. I was playing professionally in groups before Syd. So technically speaking, I was a little better than Syd when we were at college. We sat around learning Beatles, Rolling Stones, R&B, and blues songs. I can recall spending some time working on “Come On”, the first Stones [single], working all that out, and playing harmonicas. He’d know something, I’d know something and we’d swap, as people do in back rooms everywhere.’

In lunch hours, Syd and David played a great deal. ‘Listening to the same music, our influences are probably pretty much the same,’ Gilmour recalled. ‘I was probably a couple of streets ahead, teaching him to play Stones riffs every lunchtime for a year at technical college.

‘We learnt them together. I was better at learning other people’s stuff parrot-fashion. Guitar was not his strongest feature, his style was very stiff. I always thought I was the better guitarist. But he was very clever, very intelligent, an artist in every way. And a frightening talent when it came to words, and lyrics – they poured out.’

Roger Waters, never one to give credit lightly, asserted that Syd displayed ‘an incredible way with words’. Music brought Barrett and Waters together, though bereavement deepened the connection. ‘Syd and Roger bonded over deaths of their respective fathers,’ observed Nigel.

The literary influences Syd absorbed began to bear fruit, aided by his innate gift for wordplay. At the Tech, Barrett excelled in public speaking and poetry recitals, plays and theatre. A charismatic actor in Harold Pinter or Samuel Beckett plays, Syd honed his stage presence.

Barrett and Gilmour strummed guitars as an acoustic duo at the Mill, a pub down Mill Lane across from the Mill Pond, harmonising on Everly Brothers and Beatles songs with others like Alan Sizer and Pete Atkins. Gilmour lived alone in a tiny bedsit with a Hofner Club 60 guitar, attending the Tech, and practicing. ‘Dave was not really that good yet,’ said Clive Welham. ‘I remember him struggling to get through “Apache”.’

Gilmour improved with help from Bob Klose, who was a couple of streets ahead. After the Mottoes drifted apart, Clive Welham joined the

Ramblers, which Gilmour had hooked up with in 1962. The Newcomers gigged around town, and Gilmour's talent shone through. By summer 1963, they were filling the Rex.

Syd played in amateur groups from age sixteen onwards, half-joking when he said, 'I didn't play much in Cambridge because I was from the art school, but I was soon playing on the professional scene and began to write from there.'

American surf-rockers the Ventures played instrumentals like 'Walk Don't Run', Top Ten in 1960, heavy on echo and reverb effects. Their album *The Ventures in Space* pioneered the space surf variant of surf rock, otherworldly sounds made with guitars and effects. The ragged quasi-Middle Eastern scales of surf-rocker Dick Dale, who as a child lived in Beirut, provided part of the basis for Barrett's own chromatic mayhem on 'Lucifer Sam'. 'Scavenger' and 'Surf Beat' came out on single in 1963, followed by ferocious 'Misirlou'.

In summer 1963, Syd and Libby, accompanied by Rosemary, went on a summer holiday to the traditional working-class Butlins resort in Skegness, Lincolnshire. A modish Syd, in coat and slim tie, and Libby, with a PVC raincoat and bobbed hair, joined couples doing the foxtrot in the Viennese Ballroom, lads in ties and girls wearing long skirts like tablecloth patterns. Syd looked handsome in an early-sixties Billy Fury way, well built and sturdy.

Away from the hubbub and formality of Butlins' organised fun, Libby snapped photos on the edges of the camp. Syd wears a black leather coat, dark glasses and black jeans, aiming for an existential Parisian Left Bank look. Here he looks like a completely different kind of cat, sporting the same tough yet sensitive image the Beatles were rocking in Hamburg. Storm Thorgerson subsequently took experimental black-and-white snaps under lowlights of Syd and David Gale striking moody poses for the camera.

Nigel and his girlfriend Anne MacBay struck out for Paris, exploring the Left Bank, hobnobbing with Beats and existentialists at cafés, jazz clubs and bookshops. They finagled a visit with William Burroughs in his Spartan room at the Beat Hotel. Nigel recalled that the writer bluntly told him not to sit on his bed in his wet coat. Burroughs's grand statement was a deadpan, 'Money is always slow in coming.'

John Davies, Storm, Dave Henderson and David Gale were soon off to Ibiza and Formentera, a link between Cambridge and the Balearics that drew Syd twice.

When the Rolling Stones released their first single, Chuck Berry's 'Come On' backed with 'I Wanna Be Loved', on 7 July, Barrett bought it at Millers. A week later, he caught them on television, performing 'Come On' on *Thank Your Lucky Stars*. Two weeks later, on 20 July, he and Libby watched the Stones perform an early ballroom gig at the Corn Exchange in nearby Wisbech. Mick Jagger wore a pink tab-collar shirt, and leered and preened from the stage. Keith Richards and Brian Jones played loose, frenetic rhythm and blues.

During the interval, many went into the pub next door and chatted with the group, easy because there were not many in the audience. Jagger made a beeline for Barrett and talked about blues obscurities. When the Stones returned, to the Rex Ballroom on 30 September, one hundred and fifty Cambridge boys and girls arrived on scooters, motorbikes and in cars. The excited Emo, Nigel, Storm and Syd queued in the cold. 'Most of the city's teenagers seemed to be there,' recalls Warren Dosanjh. 'The Stones wore black PVC jackets, and performed on a simple raised platform with no security. During the interval, they stood up at the bar with the rest of us, mingling quite freely.'

Syd wore his copy of the Stones' eponymous April 1964 debut album out from repeat plays. The Number One LP featured Bo Diddley's 'I Need You Baby (Mona)' and Slim Harpo's '(I'm a) King Bee'. Nine of its tracks were covers, with 'Not Fade Away' – a Buddy Holly number redone to a Bo Diddley rhythm – becoming a big hit on the new pirate radio stations.

An idyllic summer and autumn of rock'n'roll, cannabis and sex faded into winter 1963. In November, the Beatles played at the Rex, though Syd, disappointed, could not attend. He had an entrance interview for the Camberwell School of Arts and Crafts in London. In contrast to the previous winter's bitter cold, the damp, misty weather ensured that temperatures seldom dropped below forty degrees. The Cambridge crowd frolicked through the winter, going walking every day. The unseasonably

mild weather meant flowers budded in February. Spring 1964 promised excitement.

On Easter Sunday, the BBC's Shipping Forecast ('*there are warnings of gales in all areas except Biscay, Trafalgar and Fitzroy*') was abruptly drowned out when DJ Simon Dee began a new era with a simple introduction beamed across the airwaves: '*Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. This is Radio Caroline broadcasting 199, your all-day music station.'*

Radio Caroline broadcast from a small boat fitted with an antenna anchored outside the three-mile territorial limits of Great Britain, projecting pop music and DJs with silly pseudo-American accents by way of Soho, charitably dubbed 'Mid-Atlantic'.

Breaching the BBC's dull monopoly, the pirate radio stations were a potent antidote to the bland fare on the BBC's *Light Programme* that sent grandmothers snoring into their cocoas for what seemed like an eternity. Soon a dozen barely seaworthy vessels were anchored outside the realm. Pirate radio disc jockeys brought American black R&B to the nation – Stax, Tamla Motown, and Atlantic singles.

Radio Caroline, and rival Radio London, were soon jockeying with Radio Luxembourg for a share of the emerging youth market. In one year, pirates reached thirteen million listeners each day. Authorities were displeased, with pirate stations denounced in Parliament.

'A radio station could easily be inflammatory, seditious, obscene or undesirable, with no protection to the public,' railed Liberal Party MP Jeremy Thorpe. Well, he would, wouldn't he?

Peter Whitehead studied physics at Peterhouse College. He then took six months off to paint, lodging at the Grange Road home of scientist Peter Mitchell. 'Syd was dating the girl in the house where I lived and he and the boys practiced outside my room while I was playing the Modern Jazz Quartet, Leoš Janáček, Richard Wagner and Béla Bartók very loud to drown their noise! I tell people my music was the source of Syd's peculiar blend of pop, classical and jazz. They think I'm joking. Not at all. I confess, reluctantly, I thought pop music was utter rubbish. It took me some time to see its significance – and enjoy it.'

Whitehead's studio jutted into the hallway of the room where Syd and the Hollerin' Blues practiced. Barrett had begun seeing Mitchell's daughter, Juliet. When her parents left on holidays, the group set up in the basement to pound out crude versions of R&B standards. Whitehead says, 'They probably thought I was crazy, but would drop in to talk occasionally. Syd was one of a bunch of younger guys who came around, mainly because there were pretty girls in the house.'

Peter's Swedish girlfriend and a bevy of cousins filled the house with jollity. Whitehead painted furiously and blared classical records on his hi-fi. His Leoš Janáček's 'House of the Dead', Oliver Messiaen and Richard Wagner records competed with the cacophonous blare in the next room. 'Poor old Syd was doing his Chuck Berry and Little Richard and having to compete with my *Das Rheingold.*' Not that Whitehead held great hopes for the group: 'The Hollerin' Blues sounded awful to me,' says Whitehead, 'like bad Schönberg.'

Barrett banged out Bo Diddley rhythms against the fixed isorhythms of Wagner. Syd battled gamely with his crude amplifier, as Whitehead raised the volume on his hi-fi. Somewhere in the middle, Barrett hit upon an accidental synthesis of blues and classical. Curious, Syd talked to Whitehead about painting and his classical albums, studying the sleeves. 'Syd was a weird experimenter on the guitar,' recalls Whitehead, who listened in dismay as he passed.

Even at this early stage, experimentation set Barrett apart. He edged away from the riffs Gilmour played with fluid technical skill in favour of exploring new variations. Barrett avoided traditional blues solos for slide rambles along the guitar, with quick swoops imitating a mewling cat.

On 'Roadrunner' Bo Diddley scraped his plectrum across amplified guitar strings to suggest the roadrunner zooming past in Doppler effect. Barrett heard a parallel between slide blues and *glissandi* drawn across stringed classical instruments in chromatic swells. A glide from one pitch to another *glissando* bent pitches to produce a sound like a cry, or a cat mewling. Syd unlocked his music listening to Igor Stravinsky's *The Rites of Spring* alongside Bo Diddley.

'I remember being in Syd's big front room in Hills Road and Syd first drew his Zippo lighter along strings of the guitar, thereby ushering in the

psychedelic music era,' insists Gale. 'I was there, and clearly, this was something he discovered on his own. He said, "Listen to this!" Picked up his Zippo, and dragged it along his amplified guitar. This was to become a key ingredient in the Pink Floyd sound.'

This electric *glissando* technique was an invention of Syd's; the blues slide riffs he loved clashing headlong with modern classical strings. Gale believed that Syd's unorthodox use of Zippo was an extension of his experiments in painting. One inspiration fed into the other. Translating painting experiments into music, united by tactile instinct, formed Syd's synaesthetic arsenal.

With Pink Floyd's guitar sound of distinct sustain, slide, echo and suspended notes, authorship has been contested. Did Syd or Gilmour invent the Pink Floyd sound? Well, both did. David Gilmour said, 'Syd started off on slide before I did, but I used a little Binson echo before he did.'

They mixed Hank Marvin's echo-laden Fender Stratocaster sound with surf rock and slide blues. Gilmour's technical ease meant he learnt riffs and put them to work in concrete, logical fashion. Barrett took the same riffs and looked at them as abstractions. Gilmour noted, 'He did not have much in the way of chops, not a technically proficient guitarist. He was incredibly inventive. He used the instrument in a different way, not what you'd call standard tuning.'

Copying riffs note for note, working up through imitation, the two guitarists bifurcated on separate tangents. To be unconstrained by theory requires intuitive connections among disparate points; usually done best by beginners or experts seeking simplicity unerring in directness. Barrett arrived at this through intuition. 'I acquired a twelve-string guitar, then a bass guitar, which I played with another group, the Hollerin' Blues,' explained Barrett. The group got their name from Charley Patton Delta blues album *Screamin' & Hollerin' the Blues*. 'I moved into the blues field, this time playing bass, another Hofner, and I played that for a couple of years.'

The switch to the Hofner 500/5 bass was prompted by ex-Shadow Jet Harris, whose 'Man from Nowhere' instrumental rang heavy on machine-gunning reverb. Harris also looked deathly cool, with subsonic bass slung low as he played with sunglasses on. When Barrett ditched guitar for

bass, he listened to Jet Harris's instrumentals with Tony Meehan, including 'Diamonds' and 'Man From Nowhere', which were all over radio in 1962 and 1963.

In April, even the constant cold drizzle could not damper Barrett's enthusiasm for rehearsals with his new band. By May, miraculous English spring weather broke through, sun shone on a town turned green. The Hollerin' Blues rehearsed at Hills Road, and then played gigs in July.

The Hollerin' Blues were the side project of Alan 'Barney' Barnes of the Newcomers and the Ramblers, and Barrett played with him at various times. Syd often played with various people at once. At the Masonic Hall with its bar and small stage, The Hollerin' Blues ploughed through Jimmy Reed's 'Ain't That Lovin' You Baby' and 'You Got Me Dizzy'. Barrett played bass with Steve Pyle on drums, Ken Waterson – from popular local band the Louis Pocrowski 7 – sang and shook maracas, Pete Glass played harmonica, and Barney Barnes played piano and sang backup vocals.

They played at the Union Cellars below Cambridge Union Debating Society, home to the Footlights Club, where the Cambridge Circus comedy team, among them many of Monty Python, performed. Barrett missed one gig, too ill to attend. The lads trundled their gear down a whitewashed passageway, set up on a tiny stage and played while friends sat on vinyl seats ringing the fluorescent-lit room painted black. 'We only did three gigs,' recalled Ken Waterson. 'The Footlights Club went out on a blast of "La Bamba" for half an hour. Me and Barney doing a conga with the audience stoned out of our heads. That was wild.'

Syd, Barney Barnes, Alan Sizer and John Gordon had jam sessions at the Footlights. Sizer, noted for his guitar prowess, played 'The Shuck' by the Ventures with great fluidity. Paul Simon, then a foreign student at the university, came down and played Davey Graham's 'Anji', which later turned up on Simon and Garfunkel's debut album. Afterwards they all repaired to the Criterion to hang out with the 'arty-farty lot', as Waterson called them.

John Watkins recalled Syd as a musical magpie: 'Syd was the person who'd form a band every week. He was famous for always playing with different people trying different things.'

One such new group was Those Without, named by Stephen Pyle after a 1957 Françoise Sagan novel *Those Without Shadows* – demonstrating a taste for French existentialist literature. Jean-Paul Sartre and Albert Camus were hot reads in Cambridge, though Sartre droning about being and nothingness held less immediate appeal than the Beats. Syd's dress sense changed from coffee-house bohemian to sharp European modernist cool, which did not escape the notice of young women.

Syd debuted with Those Without in July, playing bass and singing at the Blue Horizon Club inside the Guildhall. At band practice in the Ancient Druids pub in Fitzroy Street, Syd played the Kinks' brand new single 'You Really Got Me' repeatedly on the jukebox.

Soon after, he wrote his own 'Effervescing Elephant', shining with characteristic wit. Like Belloc's *Cautionary Tales,* a tiny fable on pride, with fatal consequences for a hapless elephant. The jungle scenario and animals – tiger, elephant, and water bison – were redolent of Andrew Lang's *The Red Book of Animal Stories*. At seventeen, Barrett showed ample wit, with deft timing and juggling ability. 'I did tend to take lines from other things, lines I liked, and then wrote around them,' said Barrett. 'It was writing good songs that mattered, really.'

One Cambridge friend recalls, 'It was not unusual for him to be playing around on a guitar and writing. He would often play me a song or tell me he had a new song. His songs were not about any one person or another. They were impressions – notions, scenarios, fun. They were snippets, jumbled together – difficult to say what inspired him at any one given time.'

To Barrett, a song was to be shared, written to amuse friends. The word 'you' can be found by the hundreds in his lyrics, with far less 'me' or 'mine' as balance. A dialogue between 'I' and 'you' runs parallel throughout – a missing half to complete him. Writing songs was always related to playing, not for his amusement alone. It was exciting for him to have a thought and turn it into music.

Offsetting related tempos, Barrett's songs had melodic richness and curious harmonic structures; his outstanding ear for melody being perhaps his greatest gift. His elaborate wordplay was rife with double meaning, irony and an evident eye for economically capturing essential

images. Barrett's work is rich with stormy contrasts, relentless rhythm or gentle acoustic strums, dense rhymes to nimble melodies.

Syd visited new friends Matthew Scurfield and half-brother John 'Ponji' Robinson at Adams Road, on the posh side of Cambridge. They first connected at Syd's eighteenth birthday party at Hills Road in January 1964. Pete Glass brought an appalling alcoholic concoction they sipped on the stairs. Scurfield was impressed by Syd's 'undoubted spirit' and imagination. Syd brought his guitar and sang 'Effervescing Elephant'. Storm Thorgerson thought the song was nice, though he was not bowled over. Storm remembered 'thinking it was really nice but not thinking he's going to go anywhere'.

'I envied the way Syd played so effortlessly,' observed John Davies. 'He taught me a simple but effective acoustic blues run, which I treasure to this day. A short classical piece, I knew he picked it up immediately.'

Though his output often seemed effortless, Barrett mulched songs over in his unique imagination long before anyone heard them. His offhandedness masked a no-fuss attitude about getting on with the creative process. He could conjure songs and lyrics out of the air, though. Friends recall his gift for punning. 'In Storm's old Studebaker someone observed something or other was "rancid",' recalled Gale. 'Syd instantly shouted, "Well ran, Syd!" and the car swerved across Hills Road as we all cackled with delight.'

Folk and traditional music surged around Britain, fuelled by Dylan. The Cambridge Folk Club began in November 1964 and went from strength to strength, quickly inspiring plans for an annual Folk Festival. Bearded, earnest, thick Shetland-wool sweater wearing protest singers armed with acoustics became the order of the day. Dylan brought it all back home with a strong dose of British traditional music. Dylan, like the Beatles, captured people's interest in America and Britain. Words to his songs held universal meaning. 'Dylan was probably the main person to inspire others to explore new avenues,' asserted Gilmour. 'He also made it difficult because he was so bloody good at it.'

Gilmour's parents had brought the 1962 *Bob Dylan* album from America, which he took into the music room at the Perse. The Perse Jazz Appreciation Society got into a heated discussion over Dylan's merits.

Author Jenny Fabian recalls what captured British teens: ‘Bob Dylan’s words captured the way the world was going. Things were changing, and I felt it in me. Everybody recognised one another. I came along the road of bohemianism, reading Jack Kerouac. Dylan and Kerouac were initial influences, also not wanting to be boring or be bored. There was not any major crisis to occupy people’s general consciousness.

‘Michael Horovitz and *New Departures* was an early influence; the poet-bohemian thing pulled me out the suburbs. I put on my black stockings outside the front door when I went out, because my mother did not want to me to wear them. I knew I did not want to live like my parents, but I do not know what made so many of us feel like that.’

When Dylan’s second album *The Freewheelin’ Bob Dylan* saw its UK release, Syd, Emo and friends listened in reverent silence in booths at Millers Music. Soon *Freewheelin*’ sat at Number One in the charts, and *The Times They Are A’Changin’* album followed. They were awestruck by ‘Only a Pawn in Their Game’ and ‘North Country Blues’.

Barrett attended Dylan’s concert at the Royal Festival Hall on 17 May, taking the train to London with Libby. ‘Each town sent one Syd Barrett, the first time I’d seen people like him,’ recalled Libby.

Barrett wrote his own ‘Bob Dylan Blues’, a bit later, in January 1965, after digesting *Another Side of Bob Dylan.* A mocking Dylan tribute, Barrett’s word-juggling is sharp, each couplet falling together in interlocking pieces. His acoustic playing sinuous and complex, Syd pilloried Dylan’s ‘I Shall Be Free #10’ with the lyric, ‘I’m a poet; I know it, hope I don’t blow it.’ In a letter to Jenny Spires, Barrett explained the song as being, ‘Just a little bit satirical and humorous. Ha! Ha!’

Lyrically, Barrett steered clear from autobiography, preferring to adopt the guise of storyteller or character, even when preserving his first-person intimacy with the listener. Dylan pointed to abstract metaphor, and freed Syd from rhyming childhood verse. With keen awareness, he took a step back, looking at who and what was around him.

Anthony Stern, son of a Czech émigré professor, attended the Perse. Stern played a good jazz trumpet, and was keen on painting and film. He and Will Pryor listened to Charles Mingus, and then improvised on

trumpet and piano. Stern had a studio space, where he and Syd spent much time painting and talking about avant-garde film.

Stern also attended jam sessions at the Mitchell house, and became fast friends with Whitehead. After Whitehead put on an exhibition at a Cambridge art gallery, Stern mounted a two-man exhibition with Syd at a pub in Milton, at the edge of the old Fen. At his first (and last) art show, Barrett was seventeen years old.

The *Cambridge News*, 30 May 1964, gave them a write-up: 'Barrett's work shows some advantages of art school training. His prints, monotypes and drawings are slight but necessary student exercises, but in two still lives, a landscape and two convincing portraits, he is already showing himself a sensitive handler of oil paint who wisely limits his palette to gain richness and density.'

Because of Stern, Whitehead always went to see Syd playing in bands. Unmoved by Barrett's art and music, Syd's look impressed Whitehead. 'Syd was the most beautiful and feminine of the guys around.' Barrett's longish hair, black leather coat and tight trousers were threatening and graceful, sending strong signals to females and males alike.

Whitehead painted, read *Evergreen Review* pieces by Ginsberg and Burroughs, and smoked the occasional dope that was passed his way. He liked the grotesque precision of Francis Bacon, and the flash American pop art of Roy Lichtenstein, developing in tandem with British painters David Hockney and Peter Blake. Their method had a strong impact on young painters, among them Syd, with Robert Rauschenberg also big in their circle. Earlier painters in the abstract expressionist vein, such as Jackson Pollock, were similarly influential for breaking from accepted technique.

Duggie Fields, now a well-regarded painter, says, 'English television had a segment on Jackson Pollock, dripping paint on to canvas. Insinuating that was rubbish, though I thought it was brilliant! I always liked pop art, from my interest in comic books. Lichtenstein was not even as interesting as his sources. It was interesting when he started to develop beyond his comic-book style, though I did like his technique. I was happy looking at Marvel comic books, and thought they were great. I did not differentiate. When I came to London, I got into Hockney and Blake.'

Barrett regularly talked with Whitehead and showed him his paintings, which Whitehead characterised as ‘loose, dreamy and not very striking, though memory is vague’. David Gale disagrees: ‘Syd’s paintings would have been in the pop art tradition, and rather good; like American artist Jim Dine. I remember him applying crumpled fabric to canvas and working it in.’

Barrett’s artwork blended strict representation, abstract suggestion, and repetitive patterns for effect. Barrett drew likenesses well, using slapdash ink with skill. The drawings that survive are unusual and sharp. Syd favoured small abstract pen-and-ink triangles, concentric lines and circles, and monotypes of tortoises amid large wild abstracts in red and blue. Though he excelled at either, wavering between figurative and abstract styles reflected his internal tug-of-war.

Winifred Barrett, like Mary Waters, took in student boarders – a common practice in Cambridge. Female nursing students from Homerton College lived in the Barrett home. ‘My mother and Syd’s mother had students as lodgers,’ explained Roger Waters. ‘There was a girls’ college up the road. So there were constantly great lines of bras and kickers on our washing lines.’

In one curious incident, the brassieres, knickers and garters hanging on washing lines in the Barrett garden proved irresistible to a local underwear fetishist. This character made off with nursing students’ undergarments. Barrett immortalised the fetishist in song as Arnold Layne. Transvestitism has a distinguished tradition in English culture. Men will don women’s clothing at the drop of a bra for a laugh. Gender role reversals in traditional pantomime, with natural order reversed, was brought to bear here. Barrett said, ‘Arnold Layne happened to dig dressing up in women’s clothing.’

‘“Arnold”, or whoever he was, had bits and pieces off our washing lines,’ recalled Waters. ‘They never caught him. He stopped doing it after things got too hot for him.’

One wonders whether Barrett knew more than he let on. ‘I remember the character he wrote about, a guy who pinched somebody’s washing,’ recounted Libby. ‘I do not remember it being in the paper, somebody we knew of. Yes.’ David Gale recalled that when they were doing their Royal Mail rounds, a van driver they dubbed ‘Rigor Mortis’ for his laziness

would drive them, pointing out knickers on washing lines, exclaiming, ‘Cor, I’d like to meet the owner of those.’

Dave Gilmour joined Joker’s Wild, playing R&B covers around Cambridge, with Clive Welham and John Gordon. Tight harmonies on chart hits and a clean-cut Ivy League look made them instant local favourites. Syd and Libby went once or twice to see Joker’s Wild at the Victoria Ballroom in Market Square, on Wednesday nights. They rocked and twisted the night away at ‘Cambridge’s International Rendezvous’. The group covered American hits by the Four Seasons and Chuck Berry, branching into R&B hits like Wilson Pickett’s ‘In the Midnight Hour’. Syd scrutinised Gilmour’s chords and Watkins Copicat echo effects box.

As Syd prepared to move to London to attend the Camberwell School of Arts and Crafts, live album *Bo Diddley’s Beach Party* prompted drummer Steve Pyle to throw a farewell party with invites for ‘Bo Siddley’s Perverted Bleach Party’. With Diddley’s aside ‘*Has anyone seen Jerome?*’ printed beneath, the card admitted ‘two people of different sexes (but no pooves)’, a paradox of the liberal and conventional. His bandmates solemnly presented Syd with an album they all signed, *Jimmy Reed Plays the Twelve String Guitar Blues.*

Syd left the riverbank for the open road and the wild wood beyond.

3. THE OPEN ROAD

‘This hexagram expresses the idea that the light force is the creative principle of heaven and earth. It is an eternal cyclic movement, from which life comes forth again just when it appears to have been completely vanquished.’

I Ching: Book of Changes
Chapter 24: Fû/Return – The Turning Point
Richard Wilhelm, translator, 1950

‘“Why, where are you off to, Ratty?” asked the Mole in great surprise, grasping him by the arm.
‘“Going south, with the rest of them,” murmured the Rat in a dreamy monotone, never looking at him.’

The Wind in the Willows
Kenneth Grahame, 1908

Syd hit the open road to the Smoke, swinging onto ubiquitous red double-decker buses, onto speeding tube trains. An asthmatic’s nightmare; the bright lights and big city that Jimmy Reed sang about.

The pubs shut at 10:30pm, cinemas finished just after, and coffee bars closed before 11:00pm. Things were coming around, though. Economic prosperity and especially the Beatles loosened the Victorian corset on British society. Young people born after the war were the first generation to have cash for records, clothes and hairdos.

An effortless overthrow of the grey fifties took place. ‘Society was more class-ridden and uptight, also far more prosperous, without much unemployment,’ recalls Hoppy. ‘Despite rigidity of society, prosperity engenders unconscious optimism, a difference between the sixties and today. When you are born into, and brought up in a culture, you do not know anything else, so you accept this is how it is. People growing up

now might have historical perspective of the sixties as more interesting. I don't think it is true. Things about today are shitty but the same was true for the sixties. Many still imagined Britain was a first-class county, world leader, and still had an Empire. We were just discovering problems of post-industrial society, which nobody had a clue about.'

'Swinging London didn't exist, a media invention,' says artist Duggie Fields. 'It brought about a whole tourist boom. I got tourists stopping me in the street to take my photograph. The media always got it wrong. Now, there are far more people in the media paying attention and maybe getting it right. The media was not aware what was around. What did get into the media was frequently wrong. Close, but not quite. The media did make London the focus all around the world. I'm sure there are plenty of unsung heroes from that time, as opposed to what the media did focus on.'

Fields points to a time when youth culture was in rapid flux, a culture Syd and his Cambridge friends played an active role in. 'A period, culturally, that has never been pinpointed, because it wasn't well documented by the media. There were many people of the same age in the post-war boom, many very good-looking young people around. This huge cultural difference between those who started using drugs and the mass that hadn't. Walking down the King's Road you saw people who stood out. Groups who stood out and you had empathy with them. You would smile across the road. A year later, you might be best friends. It wouldn't be important to say hello when you first saw them. You recognised them and vice versa.

'There was that difference, and to find that difference is so hard. Not so much clothes, more a perception to life, and a group identity that was different. Not that we were going to change the world, but that the world would change. This was the start of people relating in this way, which had little to do with social structures. Empathy you felt for people straight off or not. What I did and others did. I'm always reluctant to say it, but it does have to do with drugs, or did then.

'An alternative culture was viable, which it has not been since, and was not before. There was a big difference between "us" and "them". The social divide was drugs-based for a period. It took a while for it to sink in that some people I knew that did not smoke dope were fabulous, while

others who did smoke dope were idiots. There were various late-night cinemas you would walk into, and everyone was stoned, giggling going around the cinema for no reason at all, except everyone was high. A visual difference, where you recognised others on the streets as fellow heads. A musical difference as well. Now divisions are much less marked. What started small became much bigger as drugs spread. I hate to think of a culture being drugs-based, though. People bonded together around drugs because it wasn't commonplace; it was unusual.'

As winter turned to spring, an urge to capture the moment filled drab tube trains with laughter and colourful clothes. On Friday night at Oxford Street tube station, the trains glided in, doors swung open, and groovers spilled onto the platform, dressed up to have fun in the city.

Barrett arrived to study at Camberwell School of Arts and Crafts. He joined the Painting and Sculpture Department on a three-year diploma course. Housed in a redbrick Victorian building in Peckham, Barrett rose each morning and took a bus from there to Camberwell, his art college for two and a half years.

Although Syd had breezed through the Tech, Camberwell's coursework was far more rigorous. At Camberwell, drawing formed the core curriculum. Tutors put Barrett through his paces working in different mediums and materials. Despite this rigour, few doubted his ability. His art tutor, forty-five-year-old Christopher Chamberlain, an accomplished painter in his own right, was impressed with what Syd painted using blunt brushes treated with little care. Art historian William Shutes noted, 'Barrett used large single brushstrokes, built up layer by layer, layer over layer, like relief contours.'

Like Chamberlain, Barrett was keen on distortions in the optical plane, distending and elongating shapes in rippling, off-kilter perspectives. Syd's *Abstract: Chain link harrows* shows his keen eye for form and perspective. In general, he found formal instruction problematic, though his tutor's instruction proved valuable.

In draughty rooms overlooking Peckham, Chamberlain organised slide presentations of paintings noted for composition, chromatic value and perspective. These lessons spilled into Syd's musical approach. He

consciously related painting to music, and matched visuals with sounds in syntactic connections.

Chamberlain flicked through slides in the darkened lecture hall, such as 16th-century painter Giuseppe Arcimboldo's paintings based on elements and seasons, with fruits, vegetables, flowers, and fish forming portraits. One, *Summer*, featured a composite man made from intricate painted vegetables; a vegetable man, if you will. (Barrett appeared in a promotional photo with spring onions tied to his head, a knowing wink to Arcimboldo, not to mention René Magritte's *Son of Man*.)

Gustave Caillebotte's 1875 painting *Les Raboteurs de Parquet* or *Wood Floor Planers* depicted men scraping wood floors in striated patterns. Barrett was later inspired to paint his room in alternate stripes. Appealing to Barrett's Cantabrigian sensibilities were paintings like Gustav Klimt's 1903 *Beechwood Forest,* where dense beech trees blot the sky, each leaf captured in one golden brushstroke.

The few surviving examples of Syd's works from this period show artisanship and skilful composition. His interest in repetition saw him create stripped-down block prints of crosses in colour fields. He printed several in series, each echoing the original in variation. If anyone expressed interest, Barrett was prone to giving them away. Even at eighteen, Syd felt that art was made of the moment and the springboard to the next work and next moment.

Despite his evident technical proficiency, at intervals Syd affected a slapdash, childlike primitivism. He drew scribbly black lines dosed with bright splashes. One from Camberwell, crude watercolour insects, graced his second solo album. Barrett printed linoleum-blocked shadows cast by flowers, on large paper, rotating the lino in tangled vines. In studios, he stretched canvas and built his own frames, resourceful at using whatever was at hand. Syd worked prodigiously on still-life flowers on vellum, with dry brush and lightly appliquéd oil.

Fellow student Richard Maunders recalls, 'Syd Barrett was a student there, in the year above me. I remember him well, a very laidback, and modest and gentle person. Great days, and creative output was immense and imaginative.' Barrett acknowledged his time at Camberwell as 'the rate of work, learning to work hard. Painting brought me here to art school. I always enjoyed that much more than school.'

A competitive streak drove him, if only to prove what he could do. ‘The fine arts thing at college was always too much for me to think about. What I was more involved in was being successful at arts school.’

Camberwell proved to be a hothouse of ideas. Syd locked into a network who shared a common outlook. Art school developed what we know as the sixties, certainly for Barrett. Education authorities put those who did not fit in elsewhere into art colleges. Entrance qualifications were vague, with academic scores waived when portfolios showed promise. Gifted painters, fashion designers, writers and multimedia artists sprang from Hornsey, St Martins, Camberwell, Goldsmiths and others.

The schools were also a laboratory for nascent English rock musicians; Pete Townshend, Eric Clapton, Syd Barrett, John Lennon and Ray Davies all attended art colleges. Government grants meant exposure to a wealth of ideas, and time to form bands. This proved to be a solid long-term investment for the education authorities; by the decade’s end art students turned rock stars brought in millions in foreign revenue and taxes.

‘One of the only sectors of society that resisted phoniness in society was people in art schools,’ asserts Pete Brown. ‘Although I never attended art school, which was my regret, I always hung around people from art schools because I knew that was where it was at. That was where creativity came from. I was turned onto the Beats because art-school people were always looking for, and open to, outside influences. There was freedom in art schools totally missing in universities from the late fifties to mid-sixties. The best cultural breeding grounds for the more creative white musicians, writers and artists.’

Guitarist Keith Rowe, of experimental group AMM and a key Barrett precursor, comments, ‘My biggest influence was having gone to art school. At Plymouth School of Arts and Crafts, there were four in the painting group. In the other group was Mike Westbrook, English jazz performer. I got into music to play jazz in the group he organised. Substantial British musicians experimenting and breaking through the old barrier came from art schools, went to art schools or were in art-school circles. The Pink Floyd a classic example.’

More work took place in canteens and pubs then classrooms, as students bounced ideas around. The prevailing ethos was extreme visual and auditory stimulus, with drab postwar colours discarded in favour of violent pinks, aquas and reds. Art-college students liked their music likewise amplified: short, sharp and shocking.

Budding musicians mixed with visual artists and those with handy technical ability. Auto-destructive art disseminated through colleges from tutors like Austrian artist Gustav Metzger – Who guitarist Pete Townshend's tutor at Ealing School of Art. Metzger and others were disgusted with traditional arrangements where artists showed in galleries and wealthy collectors purchased their work. Determined to make art that could not be compiled, collected or sold, they mounted the Symposium of Auto Destructive Art. On a deserted lot on London's South Bank, they assembled pieces to destroy. Metzger spray-painted nylon sheets red, black and white, with hydrochloric acid until they dissolved in the wind. Police were displeased and collected hundreds of pounds in fines.

John Latham, a radical instructor at St Martins College of Art and Design, assembled 'Skoob Towers' – books set afire, and was dismissed for destroying a despised arts textbook from the library. Hornsey student Peter Dockley comments, 'The book in question was a tome on art criticism by Clement Greenberg. Latham tore pages from the book and gave them to his students, asking them to chew and spit out the paper. Digestive enzymes in saliva started breaking down the paper, continued by various acids and chemicals, so the book reduced to compounds and chemicals. These were separated and placed in labelled phials, and returned to the library beautifully presented in a custom-built case.' Soon, the Notting Hill-based artist would take part in happenings alongside the Pink Floyd.

Roger Waters and Rick Wright shared a flat with Hornsey students Dockley and Pete Kuttner. 'While Pete Kuttner and I were at Hornsey, Gustav Metzger gave a lecture/demonstration in the main hall at the college,' recalls Dockley. 'Metzger used ink suspended in an oil base, housed between glass small enough to insert into a projector that used two-by-two-inch slides. The lecture was completely enthralling. Suddenly, these miniature-scale coloured ink events and interactions were blown up fifteen-foot square. I turned to the back and there were

Waters and Wright, soaking up Gustav's performance. They went to speak with him afterwards, and to look in more detail at his equipment. Artist Mark Boyle was also using similar projections, so it was in the air. I like to think Gustav, a brilliant artist but very unassuming man, was in part responsible for a chief component of the psychedelic experience.'

'People who go to art schools are people who don't want to indulge in a career with a big C,' opined Waters. 'Art school is one of those situations where you have time if you want it, and can get away with it. There is not so much to learn. You have to do more and learn less.'

Waters chose architecture, enrolling at Regent Street Polytechnic in September 1962. It was a liberal, radical arts college, especially the architecture department, as progressive as any arts school. Classmate Andrew Brown says, 'Roger Waters and I were both students at the Poly. I studied photography and he studied architecture. We both knocked around at the same student parties. Roger, whose skill with guitar was becoming apparent, had made his low opinion of British architecture well known. One day a lecturer sarcastically said, "Why don't you give up architecture and take up guitar?" So Roger did.'

Waters found another lecturer, Mike Leonard, to be more supportive. 'Encouragement to play my guitar came from the head of my first year. He encouraged me to bring the guitar into the classroom. If I wanted to sit in the corner and play guitar during periods that were set aside for design work and architecture, he thought that was perfectly all right. My first encouragement. At the Polytechnic, I got involved with people who played in bands, although I could not play well.'

In spring 1963, fellow architecture students Nick Mason and Rick Wright joined Waters to form Sigma 6. The group formed around a revolving cast of Waters on guitar, Wright on piano, Mason on drums, Clive Metcalfe on bass, and Vernon Thompson on guitar. Adjunct members Keith and Shelagh Noble and Rick Wright's girlfriend Juliette Gale shared vocal duties. 'I went to architecture school at Regent Poly in 1963,' says Duggie Fields. 'I met Roger Waters in the same group. On Friday afternoon dances, I was Juliette's dancing partner.' Sigma 6 played a few dances in the student common room, covering Beatles songs and Motown tune 'Money (That's What I Want)'.

The group was variously known as the Tea Set (a pun on T-set rulers used in drafting classes), Megadeaths (showing Waters's interest in CND and nuclear disarmament), Spectrum 5, Screaming Abdabs, and then Abdabs. Culled from film *Billy Liar*, 'screaming abdabs' was slang for terror, frights, or nerves, and the group were just awful enough to merit the moniker. Their one gig was an appearance at the Marquee Club for a student film.

Rick Wright spent a year at Regent Poly, with additional private lessons in music composition and theory at Eric Gilder School of Music. Switching to the London School of Music, he spent two months studying piano and cello, all while studying architecture until he dropped out of the Poly.

Multi-instrumentalist Wright played cello, trombone, guitar and violin, and favoured classical music. A quiet lad, he listened to classical compositions in his bedroom; Johann Sebastian Bach's *Brandenburg Concertos*, Ludwig van Beethoven and Béla Bartók. Wright taught himself guitar while laid up with a broken foot, then switched to piano. Self-taught like Barrett, Wright learnt scales and chords in his own idiosyncratic fashion.

An admitted jazz snob into trad-jazzers Humphrey Lyttelton and Kenny Ball, Wright had no time for pop. He found 'Please Please Me' by the Beatles 'utterly puerile' and went straight back to Duke Ellington. Jazz trumpeter Miles Davis's 1959 masterpiece, *Kind of Blue*, with John Coltrane on saxophone and Bill Evans on piano, informed his modal jazz style. Wright explained, 'I discovered *Kind of Blue* and got very excited. *Porgy and Bess* is a brilliant record. Influences in the Floyd came from different areas. Syd was more into Bo Diddley; I had the more classical approach.'

Wright's keyboard style had a melancholic grandeur. Never one to play fast or pound notes, he conjured his style – ever conscious that what was left out was as important as what remained. Wright took a calm, methodical approach. Miles Davis sideman and pianist Bill Evans's introspective, melancholic piano made a strong impact. Minimal modal jazz relied on melody and intervals of different modes. Slow harmonic rhythm opened up space in music, in contrast to frenzied bebop.

Wright also developed a strong interest in the free jazz of Albert Ayler, Ornette Coleman and John Coltrane. His ear for exotic sounds brought Mediterranean scales into the mix, culled from a summer spent in Greece in 1964, where *bouzouki* players riffed endlessly in Phrygian. He subsequently acquired a Farfisa Combo-Compact electric organ, his mainstay until 1968. A touch synaesthetic himself, Wright observed, 'I tended to put a lot of sound colour into the music.'

Nick Mason had drummed since his teenage years. His lavish kit awed future Rolling Stones manager Andrew Loog Oldham when he visited Mason at home in Hampstead Heath. Mason enjoyed jazz and R&B, happiest with free-rolling mallets and splashes on ride cymbals. He was never flashy, and wore a wonderful bored expression as he played that belied his proficiency.

Mason pounded on two and four beat or switched to gentle mallets on double toms, drawing from drummer Art Blakey's dynamics, the delicate mallets of Chico Hamilton, and the crisp cymbals of Panamanian drummer Billy Cobham. Post-bop jazz was his thing, small combos where drums ran in brisk swing, simmering on the cusp of explosion. Mason was keen on bass-drum patterns kicking with muffled ferocity as he kept time. At intervals, tribal wildness crept in. Least aligned with Barrett in temperament or outlook, Nick Mason was driven by a strong work ethic and, in his own words, a 'lust to succeed'.

Lecturer Mike Leonard says, 'I first met Roger, Nick and Rick teaching architecture at Regent Poly. When I bought my house in 1963 I said, "Well, there's some space here." They moved into the ground floor. Then came Dave Gilbert, another Camberwell bloke, Bob Klose, Syd, and Roger Waters. I began to work with light projections when they were starting the group up.'

Leonard owned a three-storey house at 39 Stanhope Gardens, a tree-lined curved road of Victorian terraced homes with red-tiled roofs in Highgate, North London. In his free time between lecturing at Regent Poly and Hornsey College of Arts and Crafts, Leonard made light machines.

Descended from stage lights, Leonard's mechanical projectors had rotating discs attached. On each metal disc, he hammered waving lines and stars, covered in red and blue cellophane. He projected light through

crystals of variable shape and size to create startling patterns. Banging pinholes and patterns in his atelier with hammer and chisel, Leonard's experiments sparked the group's interest in the interplay of light and sound.

Leonard was involved in the Light/Sound Workshop; Hornsey tutors experimenting with lighting gear and audio cast-offs: 'A programmed audio-visual environment.' Several members went on to form radical avant-garde architectural group Archigram.

'I was doing experiments at Hornsey, where I got a couple of days teaching,' explains Leonard. 'I had a projector and started playing, putting coloured cellophane toffee papers in and combs, making wiry patterns. I used ribbed glass and coloured cellophane. We set up a department at Hornsey. We played around with lights, building three-dimensional arrangements and shining spotlights. We got a reasonable collection of equipment. Lighting experiments were done there, in the time of Syd Barrett. Later, I left Hornsey and set up my own workshop in my house. In the attic I played around with music.'

Light machines sprang up around intellectual hotspots, with Ian Somerville's Dream Machine – a stroboscopic light device designed to induce altered states – among them. 'In San Francisco a group did light shows in a planetarium with all electronic music and I got a record from them,' says Leonard. 'This was before they had equipment to do electronic sound properly and sounded like someone's vacuum cleaner being switched off and on. There was not a lot going on. Other people worked with light, artists in France and Germany playing with light in art. Not psychedelic then, there were people doing things with liquids, but I found them primitive. They just tweaked when they got warm.'

Artist Mark Boyle was also part of the Light/Sound Workshop. He and artist Joan Hills branched out on their own, after finding the Hornsey group's fixed audio-visuals a poor reflection of a shifting world. His interest swerved toward liquid light shows. Boyle called his light work 'art' from the get-go, which few colleagues did. They beamed light shows at Horovitz and Brown's. By 1964, New Departures was hosting jazz and poetry gigs at the Marquee Club with Boyle's lights flickering vivid shadows over musicians.

After six months together, the Tea Set was joined by Syd Barrett on rhythm guitar and Robert (Rado) Klose on lead. Klose came to the Poly two years after Waters. Their arrival cemented the group into a regular working unit. No one wanted to sing, so they recruited Chris Dennis, a blues vocalist from Cambridge. 'Syd and I had always vowed when he came up to art school, which he inevitably would do being a very good painter, he and I would start a band in London,' explained Waters. 'I was already in a band, so he joined that.'

In Nick Mason's autobiography *Inside Out,* Bob Klose recalled that he, Chris, Roger and Nick were rehearsing R&B covers in the attic at Stanhope Gardens. 'Syd, arriving late, watched quietly from the stairs. Afterwards he said, "Yeah, it sounded great, but I don't see what I would do in the group."'

'Roger Waters was older than I was, at the architecture school in London,' recalled Barrett. 'I was studying in Cambridge before I had set up at Camberwell Art School. I was moving backwards and forwards to London. I was living in Highgate with him; we shared a place there, and got a van and spent a lot of our grant on pubs. We were playing Stones numbers. I suppose we were interested in playing guitars, I picked up playing guitar quite quickly, [though] I didn't play much in Cambridge because I was from the art school. But I was soon playing on the professional scene and began to write from there.'

When Nick Mason and Rick Wright left the house, preferring to live at home, Klose and Syd moved into Stanhope Gardens. 'Syd breezed in,' says Mike Leonard, 'a sparkling, ebullient character, buoyant and bouncy, and full of energy. Later, he went strange in the head, but you would never have realised. There wasn't any shadow hanging over him. The others could be remote and standoffish, superior in some way. You would ask them a question and they would not deign to reply. But Syd was always a warm and happy guy.'

Mason was likewise impressed, 'Syd was delightful, when it was fashionable to be rather cool. No one introduced anyone to anyone else, so you spent whole parties addressing everyone as "man". Syd was someone who would come up and say, "Hi, I'm Syd," a really easy and outgoing personality."

‘Syd had almost too much talent, and strange charisma, tremendously gifted,’ recalled Klose. ‘A great rhythm player, with terrific time, he took that in directions no one could have imagined.’

All involved remember Klose as the band’s best musician, with fluid R&B licks. ‘Klose was the guitarist,’ says Leonard, ‘a high-speed, fluent character. He played with the Tea Set off and on while in the first year of architecture school.’

The versatile Klose played guitar, wailing harmonica, sang or shook maracas. Waters said, ‘With the advent of Bob Klose we had someone who could play an instrument. We did the shuffle job of who played what. I was demoted from lead to rhythm guitar and finally bass. There was always this frightful fear I could land up as the drummer.’

‘I had to buy another guitar because Roger played bass, a Rickenbacker, and we didn’t want a group with two bass players,’ explained Barrett. ‘So I changed guitars.’

Barrett bought a Hofner Committee hollow-body guitar, a boxy contraption, unwieldy and troublesome to keep in tune. The guitar was a fair copy of Bo Diddley’s Gretsch. ‘Bo Diddley was definitely my greatest influence,’ Barrett admitted. ‘Around that time one came across so many unheard of records one felt one was really discovering something.’

The lads followed the British R&B scene centred on the Marquee Club and Eel Pie Island Hotel, tuning into John Mayall’s Bluesbreakers and Long John Baldry and his Hoochie Coochie Men with singer Rod Stewart.

They learnt their repertoire off blues and R&B albums Klose and Barrett brought from Cambridge, among them *Authentic R&B* (Stateside, 1964) and *The Blues – Volume 1 & 2: R&B Series* (Pye-International, 1960). *Authentic R&B* featured Slim Harpo’s ‘I Got Love If You Want It’ and ‘(I’m a) King Bee’. Both songs became band standards. Mike Leonard also had a remarkable blues collection.

Peter Kuttner, who shared the flat with Waters and Mason before Barrett and Klose, says, ‘Mike Leonard was inspirational. Through him, I got to love blues piano, which he played on his baby grand or gramophone. He had a superb record collection of legendary players like

Albert Ammons, Pete Johnson, Pinetop Smith, Meade Lux Lewis, and Speckled Red.'

Barrett and Klose had joined a blues band, though they brought a far more rhythm-oriented approach. Besides R&B primers, Bo Diddley covers bolstered their slim repertoire with the Gretsch-guitar-driven 'I Can Tell' and 'Give Me a Break (Man)'. Diddley's percussion-as-melody figured in the switch from R&B to soul, from mod to rock.

'I Can Tell' remained in Pink Floyd's set until the end of 1966. The song, a tale of love gone wrong, right in line with Barrett's taste, saw Bo Diddley bemoaning the fact that the object of his erstwhile affections does not love him anymore.

'Syd's great inspiration was Bo Diddley,' says Leonard. 'He was always doing Diddley licks that sound like the South-American clavé beat. Syd was a great Bo Diddley fan. They also did offbeat jazz standards, Lowell Fulson's 'My Babe' and Booker T & the MG's 'Green Onions', though nothing experimental. Syd's key thing was rhythm, which was strong. Keen on syncopated Bo Diddley style cross-rhythms chopping in. That attack suited his temperament. I can remember him playing with grit, drive and enthusiasm. Syd was the internal dynamo of the group, a dynamic person.'

The Tea Set rehearsed at the nearby Woodway Pub, where locals looked on in dismay. The group hacked through Diddley's 'Roadrunner' and the same dozen R&B covers beginner bands in London usually played. Despite Klose's prowess on lead guitar, the Tea Set were indistinguishable from hundreds of groups. Small-scale gigs followed at the Woodman, or else in the back room of the Winchester Hotel pub on Archway Road. There was also an occasional dance at the Large Hall at Regent Street Poly, or Hornsey. Barrett managed a booking at a social at his art school.

Richard Maunders, Camberwell Social Secretary, says, 'At Camberwell, his band played a couple of gigs in the college as the Spectrum Five.' Maunders paid the group £20 and beer to play John Lee Hooker's 'Crawlin' King Snake' and the Kingsmen's 'Louie Louie'.

In October, they played as the Tea Set at a private party in Oxshott. With the line-up in flux, Mike Leonard and Chris Dennis performed. According to Dennis, this was their first public appearance. Leonard also

filled in on organ at the occasional gig, where they performed as Leonard's Lodgers.

At one point, Leonard was keen to join the Tea Set. 'Quite funny,' recalled Wright. 'Because there was no way we wanted him to be in the group.' Mike Leonard hardly fitted the collective profile; fifteen years older, a tweedy lecturer with grey hair. Nick Mason said, 'Mike thought of himself as one of the group. We didn't, because he was too old. We left the house to play gigs secretly without telling him.'

The name 'the Tea Set' endured until December 1964. 'During that period we kept changing the name until we ended up with the Pink Floyd,' said Barrett. Klose and Mason confirmed that Barrett came up with the name. Klose recalled that Barrett appearing at the Poly saying, 'That's what the group is going to be called… Pink Floyd.'

The name had been bouncing around inside his head since Syd's Cambridge Tech days. 'The first night I met Syd in December 1964, he told me the name of his band had been the Tea Set,' recalls Jenny Spires. 'I laughed, but he added that they had just changed it to the Pink Floyd.'

'The name Pink Floyd comes from two blues singers from Georgia, USA – Pink Anderson and Floyd Council,' explained Syd. Barrett picked up a 1962 Blind Boy Fuller LP, *Country Blues: 1935-1940*, and chanced upon the surnames of Carolina blues men Floyd Council and Pinkney Anderson from the liner notes: 'Curly Weaver and Fred McMullen, in Kentucky or Tennessee, *Pink* Anderson or *Floyd* Council – these were a few amongst many blues singers that were to be heard in rolling hills of Piedmont, or meandering with streams through wooded valleys.'

This fitted Barrett's creative style; drawing on what was at hand, and pointed to both backcountry blues and bucolic Cambridge. Syd being Syd, and loving *double entendres,* must have known 'Pink Floyd' was, supposedly, Norfolk anglers' slang for whale's penis.

When Emo visited from Cambridge, Syd asked what he thought of the group. Never one to waste time with niceties, Emo blurted, 'Sounds like a load of old rubbish and you should give it all up!' The Pink Floyd Blues Band set out for a string of haphazard gigs. When Chris Dennis left in January 1965 to join the Royal Air Force, Pink Floyd lost a Vox PA system, as well as a singer.

At the end of Syd's first term at Camberwell, he returned to Cambridge for the Christmas holiday. Cambridge was clean and green by comparison, with time and space to think and unwind. Barrett tried to convince Geoff Mott and David Gilmour to join the Pink Floyd as singers, but they were in successful local groups and declined.

During breaks from college, Syd moonlighted with Those Without. In the last week of December, Those Without played at Union Cellars off Round Church Street. Syd (lead guitar and vocals) joined mates Stephen Pyle (drums), Robert 'Smudge' Smith (rhythm guitar), and Alan Sizer (bass and vocals). Barrett, hair starting to grow out, played hollow-body electric guitar and sang.

As they played in the small cellar, Syd was taken with a striking, self-possessed schoolgirl leaning against the bar. Clad in a black coat with the collar turned up, Jenny Spires made such an impression that Syd came over and told her she looked marvellous. They met for coffee at the Guild. A week later, back in London, he wrote, enclosing a sketch of her. They began going out and he wrote amusing, light-hearted letters every week on different coloured paper – pink, yellow, blue and white – with drawings and updates on his art college work and the group's gigs and sessions.

It was a long-distance romance, and they mostly saw each other at weekends. Syd took the train back to Cambridge and picked Jenny up from home in his mother's light blue Austin A30, a car Winifred bought for him and Rosemary to learn to drive in.

'I'd go up to London or he'd come to Cambridge depending on what was happening or whether he had gigs or not,' explains Jenny. 'He was living at Stanhope Gardens in Mike Leonard's house with Rog, Nick and Bob Klose. My time with him was spent going to very early Floyd gigs between January and summer '65. I was three years younger than Syd, and so a lot of what was happening went over my head. I don't pretend to know what made him tick. Great fun and very interesting. I was lucky enough to be around him when he was enthusing about art school and his new band or simply sitting around playing the guitar, eating buns his mother had baked and listening to music.'

Back in London, the band now had a rehearsal space (Leonard's front room) and a stage (Hornsey). Leonard and his Hornsey cronies'

experimental light and sound workshop used records to accompany their experiments with light, among them *Eastern Sounds* by Yusef Lateef, an early jazz world music blend, and 1963 Japanese *Art of the Koto* by Kimio Eto.

Leonard pressed colleagues for live improvised music to accompany light experiments, and recruited Pink Floyd for the workshops. ‘I said, “Do you want to come into Hornsey a few evenings and play your music and I’ll project my images?” We did four sessions. At Hornsey we did film and back projections, all sorts of things. They were doing a bluesy thing; they hadn’t got into their more esoteric music. I was trying to get them out of 4/4 rhythms into free rhythms so they could relate to the coloured imagery, because they were still into blues.’

Though he never attended formal classes with Leonard, near the end of his life Barrett referred to Mike as ‘my teacher’. These workshops can be seen as a flash point in the development of Pink Floyd’s sound. Barrett and Wright were free to dispense with tidy solos and branch into jazz inspired odysseys. Lights and music clicked into place, an integrated element in their stage show ever after.

‘Mike was main creative wizard behind the Light/Sound Workshop. He overflowed with ideas but was undisciplined,’ recalls Kuttner. ‘This tended to make evaluating and replicating effects difficult. He was responsible for the Floyd coming into our studio to improvise sound accompaniment to our light projections. We achieved our effects through permutations of slides, wheels, belts, and optical effects behind or in front of lens. Our effects were operated by hand; we turned wheels by hand, modify an image by holding optical effects in the beam and crank acetate belts in a frame seven-to-eight-inches high and as many wide. We converted to motorised wheels.’

‘The most important starting point for the light show was Mike Leonard and the Hornsey College of Art,’ acknowledged Mason. ‘The idea music could be improvised and lighting could be improvised to go with it.’

Leonard remembers, ‘The group was very ordinary, not that good. Some tapes made here I listened to were fairly awful. Roger could not sing in tune properly, though he later developed his whispering style. There was not really a singer in the group, so they fished around for

people to sing when they had to do gigs. Long John Baldry, who was quite a personality, was one person they chased. One would never have thought they would get anywhere. They never got out of bed until one or two in the afternoon. They found a cat Roger brought home wrapped in his coat. Syd named it Tunji, after a jazz tune.'

Barrett named the cat after a track off 1962 album *Coltrane* by the John Coltrane Quartet. 'Tunji' had an Eastern air, menacing, with a slow groove that presaged Pink Floyd's excursions. Pink Floyd had keen feel for dynamics – quiet to loud, slow to fast – though from the beginning were extremely loud.

'They rehearsed here and the noise was so ferocious one woman down the road said it was affecting her health,' reveals Leonard. 'When they were here, I could turn the road at the corner a third of a mile away and still hear them practicing. When I worked at my drawing board here, I could feel instruments jumping up and down, because you'd get sound coming through. Neighbours finally got a petition up. They moved off to rehearse in the pub up the road, the Woodman on Archway Road.

'I went downstairs and ate with them on Sundays. Each in turn was Sunday cook. We had a big table, an old door I put steel legs on. Syd, cook one Sunday, came round and put half a cabbage on my plate once!' Decades later, Roger Waters complained that Rick Wright kept his cornflakes in a locked cupboard. Peter Kuttner, saving for a trip to America, admits, 'I crept downstairs and helped myself to the Floyd's cornflakes.'

Kuttner worked the soft drinks concession at the Marquee Club. The Marquee at 90 Wardour Street in Soho, was the citadel of mod R&B. 'I was at the Marquee Club long enough to offer to take a Floyd demo tape for the owners to hear,' he says. 'I found Roger and Nick to be rather feckless and supercilious and our offer was not taken up. At some point during my stay at Mike's, I recall the Floyd got their name and young girls who lived round the corner hung around outside.'

Leonard adds, 'A few groupie ladies, or potential ones, gathered outside because the group had long hair. They thought it must be a famous group. As we ate, there were these girls looking in through the window from the street. They crept round the house.'

Leonard's studio opened onto a sitting room where Asian carpets lay scattered about his grand piano. Wide front windows overlooked Central London in the distance. A hip lecturer's flat; clutter, dust and genteel poverty did little to detract from its charm. Handmade wooden shelves sagged under Penguin paperbacks bookended by Brassaï photo books, engineering manuals, and tomes about Sufi mysticism. Stuffed in various corners and cabinets were Asian gongs, flutes, African *kalimba*, a silver gamelan xylophone from Bali with wooden mallets, and Indian tablas. In Leonard's house, Syd was the gifted child who discovered mysterious antique instruments. Picking each one up, he played instinctively.

In boxes were crystals and metal discs for light machines, tools, scattered slides and clippings. An ancient gramophone sat in the corner. Syd made good use of Leonard's 78-rpm blues classics, listening to Ma Rainey's 'Prove It on Me Blues', a song about a transvestite, and 'Jug Band Blues' by Sara Martin's Jug Band.

Leonard also had recordings of the Radiophonic Workshop, audio engineers who made background noises and experimental theme music for BBC programmes *Doctor Who, The Goon Show* and Syd's childhood favourite *Quatermass*. The Workshop began in 1958 with scavenged oscillators and crude, unwieldy echo that took a day to warm up. Pink Floyd would have been familiar with the Workshop's pulsing drones and oscillating frequencies, an under-recognised integer in their sound.

Reflecting the English collector's mentality, Leonard assembled archives of ephemera, base materials Syd tuned his scattershot interest to. Barrett wrote with his guitar in the wide white room, warming spring sun sparking fitfully through pale net curtains.

Leonard built an attic studio where Syd lugged his guitar up narrow, steep stairs to work out ideas. The ever-resourceful host also built a skylight that opened onto a wooden sun deck with splendid view of London below. Barrett sat on the rooftop aerie with his Harmony acoustic, right hand strumming smoothly while changing chords with the left. Inventing, and improvising as he went along, self-guided tutelage followed. The strength of the autodidact lies in unfettered originality, forced to come up with new ways to compensate for any lack of patterns to follow. 'Syd came up with all sorts of strange poems about effervescing elephants and things, like Lewis Carroll or Edward Lear,'

recalls Leonard. ‘He had a whimsical side. That was him, this word spinning he did.’

Barrett rapidly developed the ideas that had been germinating inside his head since the days at the Mill Pond. Songs written on sunny afternoons lazing by the Cam took form, altered with new finds from Leonard’s front room. A blues riff culled from Leonard’s 78-rpm classics was given a dozen twists, surprising bandmates with novel melodic and rhythmic approaches.

‘Syd brought ability to play, also ability to perform,’ asserted Mason. ‘Eventually, obviously not immediately, he brought songwriting.’ There was time and space to create. ‘We played anything we could learn. Original material set the agenda. This mix of styles Syd had, this rather curious, wistful, folksy thing – mystical – became the key thing.’

Sitting at the grand piano, Syd and Rick discussed ideas. They communicated well musically, at a glance they knew when to shift into solos or stretch out. Wright had found a musical partner and foil: ‘When Syd joined the group, he had all these incredible ideas, lyrically and musically. Very strange and childish in a way, like fairytales, but totally unique. I’d never heard anything like it.

‘Before him, we played R&B classics. I never liked R&B very much; I was a jazz fan. With Syd, the direction changed, more improvised around guitar and keyboards. Roger started playing bass as lead instrument. I started to introduce my classical feel.

‘When Syd started writing, that changed everything. We were totally knocked out with what he was coming up with,’ said Wright. ‘He had an incredible way of looking at things. I remember sitting with him one day and he wrote a song in ten minutes. As an aspiring songwriter, I could not believe it.

‘He wrote to rhythms of words, rather than saying, “I’ve got four beats to the bar.” We had to work that out for him. He couldn’t work it out either. Each time he did it, he changed it, so he wrote rhythms to words. His guitar went with rhythm of words and timing of chord changes didn’t matter to him at all.’

Barrett bitterly recalled his bandmates and their outlook. ‘Their choice of material was always very much to do with what they thought as architecture students. Rather unexciting people, I would’ve thought,

primarily. I mean, anybody walking into [a] school like that would've been tricked; maybe they were working their entry into an art school. But the choice of material was restricted, I suppose, by the fact that both Roger and I wrote different things. We wrote our own songs, played our own music. They were older, by about two years, I think. I was eighteen or nineteen.'

Syd's relative youth made him the junior partner, while his songwriting, singing and guitar playing gave him a considerable advantage. A fast learner, Barrett was often impatient when the group lagged behind as he skipped from chord to chord.

When not in classes or rehearsing, Barrett wandered around Highgate, gazing at paintings by Rembrandt at Kenwood House, or tramped through Hampstead Heath in morning mist, cold patches in meadows warming in sunlight. He returned to Cambridge often at weekends to visit Jenny. When Emo came to town, they trounced around the West End or to Camberwell with Jenny to visit art-school friends.

'Who are my idols?' mused Barrett. 'Well, Steve Cropper is an obvious choice, and so is Bo Diddley. A great influence on both the group and me.'

Steve Cropper, of Memphis-based Stax soul instrumentalists Booker T & the MG's, was a telling choice. Although white, Cropper's funky playing percolates across almost all soul hits on the Stax label. Backing Otis Redding, Sam & Dave and Aretha Franklin, Cropper helped define soul. Soul was an aerodyne, stripped-down and refitted R&B, the music of youth, motion and futurism adopted by mods dancing under ultraviolet lights at the Scene Club. On instrumentals like 'Green Onions', Cropper's single-note stabs and repetitive minimalist riffs drive the rhythm. Using guitar as a percussive tool, like Diddley and Marvin, Cropper played with slow-burn precision, picking hard near the bridge.

Barrett took on these percussive phrases, repeating one brief phrase ahead of the beat, creating tension; manoeuvring his way around the beat, in constant motion. Cropper, like Barrett was soon to, often shouldered both rhythm and lead, so he pushed single-note lines into tritone riffs with a blue note or two, often shadowing the vocalist.

Closer to home, in October 1964, the Tea Set shared a bill at the Poly with the Tridents. Jeff Beck and the Tridents played at the musty riverside Eel Pie Hotel and had a Wednesday-night residency at the 100 Club in Oxford Street, where Syd and Nick saw them in January 1965.

'The best group in the world except for the Stones and the Beatles. They are called the Tridents and the lead guitarist looks a bit like Mick Jagger,' wrote Syd to Jenny Spires. The Surrey-born guitarist stunned audiences with ferocious feedback, and echo from a Baby Binson echo unit, as the Tridents blasted through Bo Diddley's 'Nursery Rhyme' and Slim Harpo's '(I'm a) King Bee'. Beck manipulated volume and tone controls for wah pedal effect before there was a wah pedal. Soon the Tridents outdrew the Yardbirds at the Crawdaddy in Richmond.

Experimenting with echo effects and feedback, Beck played rhythm guitarist John Lucas's 1958 Fender Telecaster (given to Jimmy Page, and used on 'Stairway to Heaven'), before switching to a blonde 1954 Fender Esquire. With Cropper and Beck in mind, Syd considered switching to a Fender guitar.

In January 1965, Pink Floyd went to the West End, bought a load of music gear on hire-purchase, and celebrated that night at Stanhope Gardens. Syd wrote to Jenny, 'Yesterday we went to the centre of London, and bought about £230 of stuff to replace Chris! Funny to think that I, with my voice, will be singing through all that money. Now all we need is an electric piano for Rick, and we are all set. I love it all.'

Barrett disposed of his grant money to purchase a 1964 Fender Esquire. The Esquire was a half-inch thinner than the standard Telecaster, lean and stripped down, with a single pick-up to the Tele's two. Though he played other guitars, Barrett maintained, 'I [always] seemed to use that first one. It was painted several times. Once I even covered it in plastic sheeting and silver discs. Those discs are still on the guitar, but they tend to look a bit worn. I haven't changed anything on it, except that I occasionally adjust the pick-ups when I need a different sound.'

His mainstay throughout his time in the Floyd, Syd found fame with the Esquire. The progression was clear – a shift from Diddley's rhythms to Cropper's treble-laden leads. In a photo, Barrett strums the shiny new Fender while his discarded Hofner Committee hangs on the wall behind. Syd also bought a Vox AC-30 amplifier for £110 on hire-purchase. With

double the volume and very clean tone, the amp had three settings, Normal, Bass and ‘Top Boost’ or ‘Brilliance’, for extra gain and tone.

Barrett’s Esquire was perfect for playing live. The lever switch gave full treble in bridge position, variable tone control in centre and full bass in front position. Moving between bass-heavy rhythm and sparkling treble-leads, Barrett switched judiciously while leaning into his amp for distortion. Syd’s Esquire proved versatile for every gig. With all twenty-one frets clear of the cutaway, Syd howled right up the neck with superb sustain. The single-coil bridge pickup was heavy, with strong mid-range, and much power at high volume. Playing live, Syd flicked the three-tone selector switch, with resistors and capacitors altering frequency response.

Syd found the second tool in his arsenal upstairs in the small attic Leonard used as his music room. He chanced upon one of Leonard’s miscellaneous gadgets, a Binson Echorec 2 echo unit. Jeff Beck’s (and Hank Marvin’s) echoes had made strong impressions on him. With Jeff and Hank in mind, Barrett rigged the Binson between guitar and amplifier. Syd realised that the Shadows merely scratched the surface of what an echo box could do.

‘The Binson was an Italian made delay unit,’ explained Gilmour. ‘Strange because it did not use tape loops. Instead, it used a metal recording wheel.’ Gilmour used a similar Watkins Copicat echo box in Cambridge, copying the Shadows and Ventures. Leonard says, ‘There was Binson or Watkins Copicat, a tape loop with magnetic head. Anyone using echo was using those two, because there wasn’t anything else around. All Binson did was five echoes of original sound in sequence, with little variation. Syd found it here; the only machinery we had. The Binson always squeaked. The squeak was picked up in the sound somehow, a nuisance. They borrowed it when they did the odd gig. They had no money so anything they could scrounge they used.’

The Binson stood out from other echo units in sound quality and stability. Integral in the Shadows’ sound, when Syd got hold of one, echo units were on the way out. The hard crunch R&B of the Animals and Stones had little use for multiple echoes.

The unit was Barrett’s great discovery and became a key integer in the Pink Floyd sound. Barrett made an intuitive leap when he saw the Binson as an instrument rather than effects box. Barrett’s mind boggled at the

possibilities as he switched through combinations. One knob controlled recording level, second playback and third limited or expanded feedback. Barrett turned feedback and swell knobs into an envelope filter. Striking a needling sharp note and playing catch-as-catch-can as the note looped back through the Binson.

Musician Josh Shamash, of cult band the March Fourth, explains, 'Syd's four-knob Binson Echorec B2 is a truly bizarre echo unit, which, though seemingly designed for antiquated fifties pop styles and nothing else whatever, is capable of far more extreme noise than anything on early Floyd recordings. Syd rarely turned knobs far past two or three – conservative settings.' The Binson was expensive, costing £140 in 1965. Syd's Esquire was £160, by comparison, in music shops along Denmark Street.

Barrett envisaged taking the machine to extremes never dreamt of by Binson engineers, and set about producing infinite echoes. Echoes could be layered one atop the other, contrasted with each other, and played as a counterpoint to guitar notes fed in. By pushing the Binson, he could dissolve solos in waterfalls of white noise. An effects box *and* primitive loop-sampler, it was a mutable effects synthesizer. What Barrett found inside the Echorec was, in poetic terms, a map of infinity. Combined with the wattage from his Vox and unorthodox guitar technique, the nineteen-year old art student was building towards a synthesis of his own style.

When Barrett introduced his unorthodox Binson technique into rehearsals with Pink Floyd, they instantly recognised that the Binson was more than just an echo box. When Leonard showed Pink Floyd how to hook up the Binson to his Farfisa Combo-Compact Duo, the basis for Pink Floyd's sound was in place. The Binson's echo gave Wright's long modal lines on Leonard's reedy Farfisa elegant sustain and matchless depth. Farfisa organs, also made in Italy, had a unique bell-like treble tone. Semi-infinite sustain marked the beginning of the Pink Floyd sound.

In the subsequent psychedelic era, only Hendrix explored echo delay as thoroughly. The Binson provided Floyd's melodic team of Wright and Barrett with many opportunities to experiment. Waters warmed to this new sound straight off: 'We always felt right from the beginning there

could be more to rock'n'roll than standing onstage playing "Johnny B. Goode".'

'Roger was good; inventive with sound,' remembers Leonard. 'We did not have much in the way of sound when we did the workshops, so he made a one-string guitar I could play around with, and make weird bottleneck effects. Roger was nimble in the mind, and was good at seeing what we could get out of what we had. They got some good things going. Creativity was there. I felt sympathetic to people who were moving into different territory and doing new things. It was a while back, but one can still feel time telescoping.'

'We didn't start out trying to get anything new, it entirely happened,' said Mason. 'We originally started virtually as an R&B group.'

'Sometimes we just let loose a bit and starting hitting the guitar a bit harder,' said Barrett, 'not worrying quite so much about the chords.'

'It's freeform,' observed Wright. 'Almost like jazz, where you start off with a riff and then improvise.'

'It stopped being third-rate academic rock, [and] started being an intuitive groove, really,' asserted Walters.

The last week of January 1965, the group recorded a four-song demo as Pink Floyd, as a handwritten inscription on the sole surviving acetate reveals. Wright knew an engineer at Decca Studios, West Hampstead. The aim was to press a few dozen 45-rpm singles for club owners, who demanded a listen before booking a band. In the grim fluorescent-lit room where the Beatles had failed their first audition, the engineer performed a cursory balance check on a two-track recording console. They recorded guitars and drums, adding piano and vocals during the following week. Writing to Jenny Spires, Barrett tellingly noted, 'everyone else watches from the other room, and I can't see them at all, but they can all see me.'

With Mason and Waters isolated behind screens, the rhythm section sounded anaemic, while Syd and Bob rang sharp. Save for engineers at EMI or mavericks like Meek, British studios excelled in thin, weak mixes with lifeless separation – much like today. Syd's two-chord stomper 'Lucy Leave' was the first Barrett original they recorded, with woman-

done-me-wrong lyrics over a standard R&B rave-up. Syd and Libby had broken up, and Lucy may, or may not, be based on Libby.

Klose played leads while Barrett held down the rhythm. The sound was tentative and formulaic, similar to dozens of contemporary British bands playing bad R&B covers. Still, Syd's idiosyncratic stamp is clear from the first bars with a descending chromatic riff that bears his treble-laden Esquire tone. Barrett strains to get a raspy blues howl, though he conveys suffocation when he huffs that he cannot breathe. If Barrett's voice was not best in technical terms, his ability to convey subtleties was evident from the start. The B-side is a perfunctory reading of Slim Harpo's '(I'm a) King Bee', which the Rolling Stones covered the year before. 'Double O-Bo', a mash-up of Bo Diddley and the theme from James Bond, was a chant Pink Floyd shouted over the riff. Last were two new Barrett originals, 'Butterfly' (possibly based on an old ragtime song, 'Flutter By, Butterfly') and 'Remember Me'.

For promotional purposes, several photos of the band were taken at the back of the house. Already, Barrett was the central figure, front and centre with the others behind him. Barrett looks dead on at the camera with a cocksure smile, the confident centre of Pink Floyd. In contrast to their slightly dour stage image, the lads leapt about for the camera like the Beatles in *A Hard Day's Night*. Pop stars in the making, with longish hair, tight trousers and pressed shirts and blazers; they do not look the slightest bit avant-garde. If anything, they resemble students aiming for Carnaby Street hip, by way of high-street clothiers Cecil Gee. Resolutely students, they had yet to develop London cool. Syd wore the cardigan and shirt his mother bought him at Joshua Taylor's department store before he left Cambridge.

When his bandmates added a pop-art white stripe to the side of the van over the Christmas holidays, Syd painted 'Pink Floyd' on the bonnet and 'Pink Floyd Sound' on his pre-amp in white block letters. One cold night in February, the Pink Floyd Sound packed their gear into the Morris J2 van for first in a run of gigs at the Count Down, a coffee-and-wine bar in Kensington. Billed as a 'Blues Group' on flyers, they had a residency every Wednesday through Sunday night.

The Pink Floyd Sound played from 8:00pm to 1:00am with a twenty-minute rest between sets. They were paid a total of £15 – far from

glamorous work. Barrett took his turn singing ‘No Money Down’ by Chuck Berry.

‘This was when Unit 4 + 2 hit the charts with their Number One hit “Concrete and Clay”,’ says Jenny. ‘There was a jukebox at the Count Down and I played it between sets when the others went off to the bar.’

Barrett said, ‘All the equipment was battered and worn, all the stuff we started out with was our own, the guitars were our own property. The electronic noises were probably necessary. They were very exciting. That’s all, really. The whole thing at the time was playing onstage.’

They played anything, anywhere, to anybody. Pink Floyd would play whatever might carry them through a set, including blues and jazz numbers – even country tune ‘Long Tall Texan’, as done by Jet Harris and Tony Meehan. Unusually for a beginner’s band, they never aimed to please – they stood aloof onstage, with a certain arrogance about their material. ‘I was quite happy standing there thundering about, playing whatever I could – that’s fun,’ explained Waters. ‘I see young bands occasionally now doing the same thing. I think it’s called thrash now, kids who can’t play, pissing about. It’s terrific, that’s all we were doing.’

Syd’s creativity flourished around Waters, Wright, Mason, and Klose. Having two architectural students as rhythm section, a music-school dropout as melodic foil and Klose taking leads served the band’s tentative excursions well. Their combined inexperience worked in their favour.

‘The Floyd’s music arose out of playing together,’ said Barrett, ‘we didn’t set out to do anything new. We worked up quite naturally from the Rolling Stones numbers we used to play. None of us advocated doing anything more eccentric. We waited until we had got the lights together and then went out.’

‘We played together occasionally,’ said Waters. ‘We went out, did £10 gigs, and played at people’s parties. We bought some gear and gradually got a bit more involved. We stopped adhering rigidly to [the] twelve-bar blues thing, and just started improvising around one simple root chord.’ This was often simple expediency, as a forty-five-minute club set needed to be filled, and improvisation bridged gaps.

Filled with new ideas, Syd wanted to share and relate. Working and living together, getting new guitars and equipment, made the new material gel. Barrett shared an experimental approach to guitar with his

colleagues, forever seeking to expand his musical and technical horizons. Long before John Lennon let loose with feedback in ‘I Feel Fine’ in October 1964, Pink Floyd producer Joe Boyd saw Buddy Guy, idol of Jimi Hendrix, in Chicago using heavy distortion. Power chords on ‘You Really Got Me’ and ‘All Day and All of the Night’ by Dave Davies of The Kinks ushered in an era of noise and feedback. Barrett liked ferocious maximum-R&B singles where guitar led the charge.

For a while, London musicians regarded Fenders as old hat, associated with Hank Marvin of the Shadows. Gibson guitars were the norm for players like Eric Clapton, who preferred a fat humbucker tone and double coil pick-ups. Townshend often played a Telecaster, and along with Beck and studio session-man Jimmy Page, brought Fender guitars back. Beck, as ever, pushed ahead, tuning a twelve-string Telecaster to D, electrifying rivals.

The Pink Floyd’s cover of Slim Harpo made one thankful they did not pursue R&B much farther. English R&B was an absurd proposition; so far removed from the original it became unique. American blues great Sonny Boy Williamson (a true son of the Mississippi Delta), on a British tour backed by the Yardbirds, was appalled at how they played blues. How peculiar their rhythm was. He growled, ‘Those English kids want to play blues so bad, and they play blues so bad!’

Despite a slavish cult of ‘musicianship’, the way in which English players mangled blues led to an interesting end product. The British blues, R&B and Beat scene was about to metamorphose. In London clubs there was a hum of excitement.

‘I saw the Rolling Stones before they had even released a record,’ said Duggie Fields, who raced to suburban Harrow to catch them playing at the Railway Hotel, or Ken Colyer’s Jazz Club in Great Newport Street. The Stones were visually striking, with a louche, anti-authoritarian vibe as they sang ‘Off the Hook’. ‘There were thirty people. Suddenly they were famous a few months later and you could not get into the place.’

‘Play with Fire’, B-side of the Stones’ first Number One hit, ‘The Last Time’, was an eerie slice of melodrama rife with menace and suffused with harpsichord tones that stirred Syd’s lurking penchant for dark chromatics.

Fields says, ‘I was listening to Bob Dylan and a lot of black American R&B when I first saw James Brown in Brixton in 1965. I knew the Pink Floyd but seeing James Brown was culturally more exciting.’ Mod meant American black R&B and soul, from Ramsey Lewis’s ‘The In Crowd’ to James Brown’s propulsive ‘Papa’s Got a Brand New Bag’. Like many early Beatles records, ‘Papa’s Got a Brand New Bag’ was sped up in the studio enough to get mods dancing double time. Horn fills became punctuation; each drum crack exclamation marks written in boldface. Seven minutes of riffing by the JB’s became a taut monster three-minute single on the dance floor at the Scene, where DJ Guy Stevens spun the latest US soul imports and local mod stompers as the crowd danced the Block and the Bang to ‘Ain’t Love Good, Ain’t Love Proud’ by Tony Clarke.

After the Tridents’ 15 February gig at the 100 Club, Crawdaddy manager Giorgio Gomelsky approached Jeff Beck to join ‘the most blues wailing Yardbirds’. In March, Beck replaced Eric Clapton, no mean feat, as many believed Clapton to be the best guitarist in Britain – ‘God’ to his fans.

Beck’s stinging tone was a vital element across their singles that year. ‘For Your Love’, ‘Heart Full of Soul’ and ‘Evil Hearted You’ were all Top Five hits. Beck switched to Fender Esquire in June, and the sting of his guitar is all over ‘Evil Hearted You’ and ‘I’m a Man’. His version of Bo Diddley’s ‘Here ’Tis’, with extended skittering squalls on blonde 1954 Fender Esquire, represented a marked departure from the tamer Clapton version.

The Who led the charge of the mod brigade. Fuelled by the ‘purple heart’ amphetamine tablets prevalent in mod subculture, the band pulverised with volume and force. American producer Shel Talmy boosted their sound a great deal. The anaemic ‘I’m the Face’ set against ‘I Can’t Explain’, recorded with Talmy in January 1965, showed a marked progression in clean, aggressive guitar lines. Townshend aimed to make pop music a bold and emblematic form of pop art.

The formidable rhythm section of bassist John Entwistle and the quartet’s brilliant, maniacal drummer Keith Moon provided Townshend with a base to stretch out at high volume. At the Marquee Club, on fifteen-minute covers of Martha and the Vandellas’ Motown hit ‘(Love Is

Like a) Heat Wave', Townshend scraped a microphone stand across his guitar strings with two Fender amplifiers on full volume. In a series of ear-shattering guitar attacks, howling with feedback, gigs culminated in Townshend smashing his spare Danelectro to pieces onstage, as the stone-faced Entwistle plucked walking bass lines.

Barrett was listening. Townshend's extended distorted solos made a strong impression. Roger Waters observed, 'I'm sure the noises that Pete Townshend was making, squeaks and feedback, influenced Syd, so we started making strange noises instead of doing blues.'

Not only Syd, but also Mason and Waters, for Moon's offbeat tom fills crept right into Mason's style. Waters adapted Entwistle's bass played as lead in obstinate repetition. The Who provided the Floyd with an outline over the next year, as Syd experimented and raised volume. Not worrying so much about playing tidy solos, listening instead to his 'intuitive groove'.

'I had seen the Who play several times, but saw them again at the Dot in November 1965 with the release of "My Generation" and wrote to Syd about it,' recalls Jenny. 'I also wrote to him about Geno Washington and the Ram Jam Band and the Small Faces around this time. Before I met Syd, in 1964, I was hugely into mod culture and a little contingent of us went by train or drove from Cambridge. We went to the Scene in Great Windmill Street, where Long John Baldry was resident and the Stones and Georgie Fame all regularly played. We also went to the Countdown, Flamingo and Marquee to listen and dance to Tamla Motown, American black R&B and soul. Syd was very interested in all this but not keen on clubbing himself. He preferred live bands.'

Month by month the tide gathered, with an instant classic hitting the airwaves every other week on Radio London. Bo Diddley provided a link to British band the Pretty Things, whose March debut featured three Diddley covers. The London-based hardcore R&B band featured stellar talents in lead guitarist Dick Taylor and wildfire vocalist Phil May.

The original 'midnight-to-six' men, the Pretties were first to pull off what critic Jon Savage noted as the hallmark of mod bands – effeminate dandyism mixed with vicious music. Utter hooligans, the Pretty Things managed twenty-seven court appearances that year. Their cover of

Diddley's 'Roadrunner' was filled with aggressive abandon and featured amplified guitar *glissando* from Dick Taylor.

Taylor's distorted steel-on-steel was violent yet melodic. Their 'Sittin' All Alone', released in October, stirred Syd to write Diddley-esque songs like 'Stoned Alone'. Author Richie Unterberger notes Taylor's 'eerie pre-psychedelia *glissando* slide guitar' in 'Can't Stand the Pain'.

'When the Night Falls' by the Eyes, released in November, was big in clubs and on Radio London although it failed to chart. Staggered, echo-drenched sweeps on the guitar, insistent drums and descending riffs suspended in darkness point in a straight line to Syd's own 'Astronomy Dominé'.

Barrett's style owes a debt to such songs, though fierce British R&B was just one element among Syd's simmering stew of inspiration. The Kinks edged away from balls-out rockers toward Ray Davies's mid-tempo languor on 'Tired of Waiting for You', a Number One on Radio London in February.

'Set Me Free' was the kind of somewhat ambiguous love song Syd excelled in, a melodic neurosis wherein Syd's quiet voice could be heard. Ray Davies's unaffected North-London accent opened the way for Syd to sing in his own voice, rather than copying Americans as many did.

The Indian-influenced drone of 'See My Friends' was a direct influence that stirred Syd toward songs like 'Arnold Layne'.

The Gregorian choir of doom on the Yardbirds' September B-side 'Still I'm Sad' was unlike anything on radio, and stirred Barrett to work on exciting new ideas filled with impact. Though he smoked tremendous hash and tobacco spliffs, he remained sharp. Syd was on his way.

4. TOAD HALL

'Societies of people sharing the same views are formed. Since these groups come together in full public knowledge and are in harmony with the time, all selfish separatist tendencies are excluded and no mistake is made.'

I Ching: Book of Changes
Chapter 24: Fû/Return – The Turning Point
Richard Wilhelm, translator, 1950

The Grove, the Gate, the Garden and the Farm: London's emerging underground scene sprang in a crescent along the Number 31 bus route, spanning Notting Hill, Ladbroke Grove, Covent Garden and Chalk Farm. Communal houses at 99 Balls Pond Road in Islington, and 79 Cornwall Gardens in the Grove were ramshackle old buildings subdivided into flats where art students, Beat poets, painters, dancers, minor pop stars, and slumming aristocrats lived.

Foremost among them was 101 Cromwell Road. Bill Barlow from Clarendon Street set up house in a two-storey flat with seven rooms in a five-storey block of Georgian flats in the borough of Kensington and Chelsea. The Cambridge set migrated to London *en masse.*

'Bill Barlow was the master renter,' recalls Jenny Lesmoir-Gordon. 'Nigel and I, John Tate, who built a tiny room in the attic (earning him the name "The Spider"). Chris Case, also at Cambridge but didn't finish his degree. All on our floor. Bryony Payne lived there as well, with Bill Barlow. Other people came all the time.'

'John Dunbar [later co-owner of Indica Art Gallery] was at Cambridge, going out with pop star Marianne Faithfull,' adds Nigel Lesmoir-Gordon. 'I was washing up in Churchill College, where he was a student. I was literally scrubbing these pans clean and he was talking to me through the window saying, "You should go to my dad's film school."

And it seemed like a good idea. John Dunbar's father owned the London School of Film Technique. I actually got a grant to go and moved to London in January.'

In January 1965, Nigel and Jenny moved into a room on the first floor. The flat proved to be a nexus as the Cambridge contingent migrated south, turning 101 Cromwell Road into an epicentre of experimental living. The living-room ceiling, floors and walls painted stark white made a perfect backdrop for impromptu light shows produced with slide projectors and loops of eight-millimetre film shot by Nigel.

Jenny Spires says, '101 Cromwell was a fantastic building ranging over six floors, with quite a grand entrance and stairway. 101 must have been grand once upon a time. Large rooms on the first two floors with high ceilings, beautiful old sash windows and lovely wide, heavy doorways, wide enough for Victorian ladies to get through with hooped skirts. The flat overlooked what must have been a beautiful garden, all overgrown by now and not accessible to tenants. The top two floors had been servants' quarters, though still grand, especially on the lower floor, which had been the nursery.'

The building was split into four flats. The top flat was two storeys up and occupied two floors. Duggie Fields moved into the building soon after: 'I ended up at Cromwell Road in 1965. 101 was a big flat on two storeys, with seven bedrooms. There were always at least nine people living there, some nights there were fifteen people sleeping there. On weekends, there could be any number of people sleeping there. During the week when I came home from college, I can remember walking in and there were twenty to thirty people sitting around. I did not know any of them and none lived in the flat. Sometimes there were some amazing people amongst them.

'Many people passed through the flat, many people lived there at different stages. Certainly, the number was enormous. Also in the building was another flat full of people from Cambridge who obviously overlapped. Slightly older, among them Nigel and Jenny Lesmoir-Gordon, who lived downstairs, this couple from Cambridge who were extremely beautiful. A very impressive couple, whom I often saw in the streets before I met them and thought, "Wow, what a wonderful pair!" very beautiful, stylish and hip.'

‘Physically exquisite, beautiful and charming. Nigel and Jenny were the beautiful people of the drugs scene,’ observes David Gale. ‘Admired by all sexual persuasions in Cambridge and London and had a constant stream of people coming through. Nigel had a curious, slightly vaporous charm. Nigel was immensely interested in Beat culture. He wrote profusely and hung out with poets. He got in touch with, and was visited by people like Allen Ginsberg.’

‘One day bled into the next at Cromwell Road,’ says Nigel Lesmoir-Gordon. ‘I liked the atmosphere because I had my camera and filmed things that were taking place. When Jenny and I got married in March, the party we had after was when all the people from Cambridge and all the people I’d met in London first got together.’

For Barrett, Cromwell Road would prove a fateful address. He visited, sitting in the white room and smoking dope with guests streaming in and out. The Cromwellian Club was down the road, a debutantes and swingers gambling club that brought pop and film stars after-hours to 101 Cromwell.

The house became a way station, where flatmates painted their rooms, blasted out music, and stayed up late discussing esoteric and occult matters. They smoked reefer scored at the Rio in the Grove, or down Brixton’s Electric Avenue.

Next to arrive were Christopher Case, an American who studied at Cambridge with girlfriend Sue Kingsford, a classmate at the Tech. Case found work as assistant to notorious art dealer Robert Fraser (who was convicted under an obscure law relating to begging for displaying works by artist Jim Dine that were allegedly obscene) at his gallery on Duke Street.

In the *Time* magazine article that announced Swinging London, Kingsford merited a mention as a ‘starlet about town’, wearing what was quaintly described as ‘a two-piece pink trouser suit with a lovely stretch of naked turn’.

‘Sue was living with Christopher,’ explains Fields, ‘and they both came from Cambridge. And this fellow Alistair “Jock” Findlay was living with Hester Page. One night, going to bed, it was Sue and Christopher and Jock and Hester. When I woke up the next day, it was Jock and Sue. Christopher and Hester were not terribly happy.’

Another Cromwell friend comments, ‘Sue stayed upstairs at 101, where Duggie was living, and graduated to Jock. Jock helped her sort herself out and they ended up together. Hester was very upset.’

John ‘Hoppy’ Hopkins graduated from Cambridge and went to work at the top-secret Atomic Energy Commission. His entry into the establishment proved brief; after an incident in Moscow, he was interrogated by the intelligence services and dropped out from his ‘proper’ job.

Hoppy set up house at 108 Westbourne Terrace in Notting Hill and worked as freelance photographer. He was a bohemian with a job, though he soon moved into an industry that fuelled the underground. Hoppy’s profitable sideline in cannabis catered to the intelligentsia, ravers and artists. He bought in bulk from West Indians living in Ladbroke Grove, who’d smoked ganja since arriving in the late 1940s to do menial jobs. Many had read about cannabis in *Absolute Beginners* by Notting Hill resident Colin MacInnes, or sniffed it at ska and R&B shows at the Flamingo and were curious.

Still, white Englishmen and women, even hip ones, were usually not keen on scoring drugs in West Indian Grove cafés. The risks involved and the racial and cultural divide meant that a switched-on dealer such as Hoppy had a ready-made market. He took up the slack by selling cannabis to ever-expanding acquaintances for £4 an ounce. By 1964, more whites were arrested for cannabis offences than blacks were. The *Times* warned of ‘A Growing Evil Among Londoners’.

Hoppy was brilliant at connecting people and acting as a catalyst. His interests were wide ranging. He tuned into whatever was new and interesting. Schoolgirls, New York free jazzers, university lecturers, black-power activists, doctrinaire leftist journalists, scruffy Liverpool poets, and the scattered and sundry good-time denizens of London congregated to talk and smoke.

For many, Hoppy’s flat, where the welcome was warm, became less a place to score and more a place to connect. Anyone from Princess Margaret’s husband Lord Snowdon to Christine Keeler’s stalker Lucky Gordon stopped by. Though the constant stream through his flat figured in Hoppy’s downfall, for a while, it was the centre of the nascent

underground. ‘Through Michael Horovitz,’ says Miles, ‘I met up with a similar scene in London, John Hopkins and his merry men. Hoppy had this communal flat at Westbourne Terrace where Oxford people stayed. So I met Hoppy.’

Hoppy lived in one room with girlfriend Gala Mitchell, with writer Alan Beckett in the front room, and John Howe upstairs. Soon Miles and wife Sue joined them. Miles recalls London as dull but peppered with small, vibrant scenes, ranging from the Rio, a late-night West Indian restaurant in Ladbroke Grove, to parties in Primrose Hill where people dropped mescaline and went looning about all-night in the nearby park. The city shut down at midnight, with food, dancing, booze and other essentials nowhere to be found. A paralytic limbo seized London, brought on by the war, the end of the Empire’s wealth, and the interminable fifties.

‘I was living in Gilbert Place, across from the British Museum,’ says Miles. ‘The whole street was still lit by gas lamps. There was no electricity in the house, so you had no phones, televisions, or light bulbs. You’re talking about London just creeping out of the post-war period, with huge bombsites everywhere. Tremendous numbers of streets had never had electricity. A telephone was such a luxury.’

The exodus to London from the provinces continued apace. Miles found work managing Better Books bookstore at 4 New Compton, round the corner from busy Charing Cross Road and near London’s West End, where David Gale found part-time work. ‘Better Books was full of young poetry-scene people,’ recalls Miles. ‘An American, Tom Clarke, was poetry editor for the *Paris Review*, most prestigious literary/poetry magazine and slightly straighter than the *Evergreen Review*. He did a tremendous interview with Ginsberg in 1965, probably the best one ever done. Tom was around a lot, and Stuart Montgomery from the Fulcrum Press; all these little editors were hanging out at the shop, also poets. There were many mimeograph poetry books, limited editions like *Night Train* and *Beat Express*. Lee Harwood did one in the East End. They and all their friends were there. All in their teens and early twenties. The *New Departures* crowd, also the beatnik scene. People like Donovan, who hung out anywhere there was a free drink. I was privileged to meet everyone I wanted to meet; I first met Burroughs in 1964.’

Nigel Lesmoir-Gordon often stopped in. ‘Poet Adrian Haggard, who became a hermit in New Zealand, was at Better Books a lot. Also, William Burroughs was in London and accessible.’ Nigel tracked down his Beat idols and got to know them well, Allen Ginsberg in particular. The role of poets in articulating the underground was vital, with the London Poet Co-op giving it a voice. Along with visual artists, poets were the first to articulate the movement underground.

Nigel’s new friends Dan Richter and John Esam published *Residu*, with contributions from Burroughs, Ginsberg and Scottish author Alex Trocchi. Better Books became an underground resource centre, an all-purpose scene of readings, happenings and screenings. The glass door was papered with posters for jazz recitals, poetry events, socialist meetings, peace protests and the like.

The London Filmmakers’ Co-operative was also formed at Better Books. Paperback department manager Bob Cobbing – with Jeff Keen, Simon Hartog and New York émigré Stephen Dwoskin – held film screenings there as Cinema ’65. They showed Stan Brakhage and Kenneth Anger.

‘When I was managing Better Books during 1965, we had a great deal,’ explains Miles. ‘We swapped Penguin Books for City Lights Books publications, box after box. I brought in Grove Press editions from America of *Sexus, Nexus* and *Plexus* by Henry Miller and sold them at 10/- each. I took a whole box into Soho and sold them for £2 10/- each to pornographers. They sold them for £5 each. People could choose if they wanted to buy them from a dirty bookshop or buy them at a literary bookshop. We never kept them under the counter. No one busted us. We brought in two hundred at a time.

‘Tony Godwin owned the shop and was publisher and chief managing director at Penguin. He changed from orange covers and brought in Alan Aldridge, Scottish designer, to make full-colour covers. We did limited edition records of Allen Ginsberg and Lawrence Ferlinghetti doing readings at Better Books. Aldridge did sleeves for those as well, the earliest quasi-psychedelic design work.’ Gustav Metzger built a liquid crystal light show for the shop window, for many a first exposure to psychedelic lights.

A cultural commotion stirred in London. On 8 May, Beat poet Allen Ginsberg arrived after a whirlwind tour of Czechoslovakia. No sooner was he crowned king of Czech students' May Day festivities, than the Communist government deported him. One catalyst in what was to come, Ginsberg showed up unannounced at Better Books.

A stunned Miles, on learning Ginsberg had nowhere to stay, invited the poet to crash at his flat. Ginsberg wasted little time in turning Better Books into his centre of operations; conversing with British poets, hipsters and intelligentsia. 'A room devoted entirely to readings, had tables, chairs, drinks dispensing machine and a little stage,' notes Miles. 'Allen took it over as his headquarters, and sat there most days.'

That same day, Ginsberg was hanging in the alley behind the Savoy Hotel while another Jewish-American bard, Bob Dylan, was filmed for the 'Subterranean Homesick Blues' episode in *Don't Look Back*. Dylan held a placard that read 'Get Born'.

On 9 and 10 May, Ginsberg and Miles, with several thousand others gathered at the five-thousand-seat Albert Hall in Kensington for a concert by Dylan. Playing the Albert Hall connoted a certain prestige, it being the finest performance venue in London.

The next day, Ginsberg hung out with the Beatles and Dylan at the Dorchester Hotel, while documentary filmmaker brothers David and Albert Maysles circled with cameras. Dylan and the Beatles sat in cool silence that masked, for Lennon at least, anxiety, until Ginsberg acted the clown to loosen things up.

Miles organised a poetry reading for Ginsberg at Better Books, which proved a resounding success. 'With no advertising, the place was standing room only, so crowded,' recalls Miles. 'You had visiting Americans, like Andy Warhol, Edie Sedgwick, Gerard Malanga and Baby Jane Holzer.'

Those who could not squeeze into the room stood ten deep at the door to hear the Beat verse icon. The Factory contingent, led by the pallid and diffident Warhol, had flown in from New York for gallery openings and stopped in at Miles's invitation. In the Warhol retinue was Kate Heliczer, ex-wife of New York Underground filmmaker Piero Heliczer, who brought reel-to-reel tape demos by the Velvet Underground. Filmmaker

Barbara Rubin showed up with an eight-millimetre film camera she swung around her head, making dizzying films.

At the end of the school term, Bob Klose left Pink Floyd, off to pursue a career in photography. ‘Bob Klose’s parents told him to stop messing about and he had to leave the group,’ explains Mike Leonard. ‘He was not really Pink Floyd-y in a way.’

After a 22 May summer dance at Homerton College in Cambridge (where Roger’s girlfriend Judy Trim studied), Klose packed his guitar and departed. Rosemary first saw Pink Floyd perform at Homerton, across from their house. ‘Great fun, but he seemed to think it was all a joke and didn’t take it very seriously – we had a giggle about it.’

‘Bob Klose leaving had a lot to do with us stopping playing blues,’ asserted Roger Waters. ‘A man with a great wealth of blues runs in his head. When he left, we hadn’t anyone who had any blues knowledge, so we had to start doing something. We just got bored with R&B. As Syd wrote more songs, we dropped others from our repertoire. But we went on doing “I Can Tell”, “Roadrunner” and “Give Me a Break (Man)” for years.’

On 3 June, Ginsberg celebrated his birthday with London’s hip elite at Miles’s flat. English Beats sported very long hair, which surprised Ginsberg. The host invited John Lennon and George Harrison, who arrived with their wives. The Beatles were astonished to find the poet deliriously drunk and stark naked, with underpants on his head and a ‘No Waiting’ sign hanging around his cock.

Inspired by the turnout for Ginsberg’s reading, a meeting was held at Better Books to organise a larger event. ‘At the initial meeting for the poetry reading, we talked about the reading Ginsberg did at Better Books, which was very successful,’ explains Miles. ‘Allen said Lawrence Ferlinghetti was in Paris. Gregory Corso was in Rome. Andrey Voznesensky was coming from Moscow. Allen said, “Why don’t we do a big reading with all the poets?” We could not have it at Better Books, so Barbara Rubin, Allen’s girlfriend from New York, said, “Where is the biggest place in town?” My wife, Sue, said, “The Albert Hall.”

‘Barbara Rubin went to the phone, rang up the Albert Hall and booked it, for ten days time, at £450. Dan Richter, American publisher of *Residu*

magazine, was sitting there, and Dan was married to an English girl, Jill, from a wealthy family. Dan called up Jill at home and she guaranteed the money, so we had the Albert Hall. Apart from the first meeting, I was not very involved in organising – Allen was staying at my flat so there were plenty of meetings there or in Better Books. John Esam and Mike Horovitz got involved slightly later. Esam was living at 101 Cromwell Road with Nigel and Jenny. Esam had been living in Majorca with Daevid Allen [later of Soft Machine] in 1963 and taking acid down there. Esam was the connection, also an organiser of the poetry reading. So threads connected all these groups and people.'

Meetings switched to 101 Cromwell Road. Esam, a New Zealand poet, arrived with Richter. An early Beat, he'd started writing poetry in Auckland in 1954. Dressed all in black, wearing shades, Esam trekked to London via Athens, a French jail and a thousand nights of bohemian bacchanalia between. A friend recalled to Jonathon Green, author of *Days in the Life: Voices from the English Underground, 1961-71:* 'Esam would take people over totally, the way a cobra fascinates a bird.'

Mike Horovitz, organiser of New Departures jazz and poetry gigs, got involved. 'There was this big pressure from the English Poets' Co-op, who wanted to read too,' says Miles. 'Allen suggested poet Harry Fainlight read and Alex Trocchi compere the thing. We had meetings at Alex's place. There were many meetings! All the people engaged in organising it also wanted to read. The list got to be about eighteen people. I thought by then it would be appalling. Many poets had never read anywhere except outside a pub! To go and read in the Albert Hall was a big ego trip. I remained involved though.'

Publicity was left to Barbara Rubin, who rang every newspaper in town. An impressive lead-in on BBC's *News at Ten*, and a photo shoot by Hoppy with poets at the Albert Memorial, fanned the flames. Hoppy's photos appeared in the Sunday papers, and 'Poets of the World/Poets of our Time', as the event's official title had it, was on.

Hoppy sent out a more informal Underground mass mailing for the 'Cosmic Poetry Visitation Accidentally Happening Carnally'. Leaflets bore Hoppy's turned-on come-on, 'Come in fancy dress, come with flowers, come!'

Hoppy's vivacious new girlfriend Kate Heliczer and friends descended on Covent Garden Market the night before the event and collected unsold flowers from stalls. At 7:00pm on Friday 11 June, the crowd filed into the Albert Hall. Kate and friends stood at the door in fancy dress, handing out flowers in generous bouquets, faces painted in psychedelic colours, the first stirrings of what lay ahead.

If ever there was a zero hour for the underground, this was it. The turnout amazed – seven thousand seated in Albert Hall's concentric tiers. As poet Harry Fainlight, teeth grinding on speed, mangled his bad-trip epic 'The Spider', Ginsberg sat on the floor, waiting his turn, nervous and a little drunk. Dutch poet Simon Vinkenoog, bellowing 'Come, man, come!' further rattled Fainlight's nerves, and he collapsed into Ginsberg's arms.

Nigel and Jenny Lesmoir-Gordon, attired in flamboyant garb, sat in the front row. 'Jenny was the girl in the polka dot hat and dress with daffodil,' recalls Nigel. 'I am sitting next to her, looking most debonair!' Jenny says, 'I felt that was a special, special time. I didn't like poetry, but I liked the buzz, a great buzz of excitement and life.' Nigel notes, 'The Albert Hall was two-thirds full, quite a lot. Timely, because all those American poets were starting to have their work sold in Britain. Certainly it couldn't have happened before.'

Jenny Fabian recalls, 'I was at the Albert Hall, sitting there gawking, thinking, "Wow, I must go out with a poet!"' Fabian seized on Liverpool poet Johnny Byrne after the reading, an encounter that sparked her exit from a bad marriage and provided her with an entrée into a new culture.

'Psychologist Ronnie Laing brought all his schizophrenic patients,' recalls Miles. 'Ian Sommerville played William Burroughs's *Valentine's Day* tape during intermission. The reading appalled Ginsberg; he was drunk and read badly. Harry Fainlight read badly and stopped halfway through his poem. Gregory Corso, who had not read for three years, chose a personal, quiet poem, rather than one of his great declamatory public poems. A terrible reading, but brilliant in the way it put everybody together. Suddenly, we recognised an enormous community in London. London being so big, we had not noticed each other, and there we were. Seven thousand people on the same wavelength, clearly something happening. To cater to that audience Hoppy and I started Lovebooks

Limited, the company that later published *International Times*. We were so turned on by the audience.'

Peter Whitehead, now in London to study fine arts at the Slade School of Art, was veering toward filmmaking. A lightweight sixteen-millimetre NPR Éclair camera with boom mike and portable Nagra tape recorder offered him a guerrilla rig ensuring high mobility. Shooting in silence with just the available light, up close without disturbing the poets, Whitehead's film, *Wholly Communion*, captured the moment the underground jelled. 'The sense of there being an underground was there already, poetry readings at Better Books, then UFO later,' says Whitehead. 'The underground became "collectively conscious", though, after *Wholly Communion.'*

As Ginsberg read and chimed finger cymbals, Whitehead filmed a lissom patient of Laing's rise and slowly spin with a radiant smile, before extending open hands to Ginsberg in spacey benediction; the spirit of the age made manifest. The grand evening closed with masterful folk guitarist Davey Graham perched on a stool picking 'Anji'.

For the poets, the Albert Hall was a high water mark. The Beat poetry boom peaked. The next wave rose in its wake.

Cromwell Road was fast becoming electric with energy, some chemically enhanced, though simply fuelled in the most part by the vibrant people who lived there and came to visit. 'Nigel and Jenny were very influential,' affirms Duggie Fields. 'The architecture students from Regent Poly who moved into Cromwell Road before me had been very straight. They didn't take any drugs. I smoked dope, and had for years. They disapproved – a social divide between those who smoked and those who did not. At parties people would whisper, "They're taking drugs! Disgusting!"

'One weekend, Nigel and Jenny tripped out three or four guys who hadn't taken any drugs. LSD changed their lives; suddenly they couldn't get enough of getting high. They found God; they had a major revelation with their first acid trip. That was still before Syd moved in. The Cambridge connection came by chance from people also living in the same building. They were on the scene, had come from Cambridge, and knew people.'

‘I took my first trips with people like John Esam, Bill Barlow and David Larcher, whom I had met in London,’ recalls Nigel Lesmoir-Gordon. ‘I suppose we did bring people into the London scene, though it seemed to be happening in Cambridge all the same. John Esam was the first person I knew of who had acid. Michael Hollingshead was around as well and Esam might have got it from Hollingshead. I was the first to take acid in Cambridge and I was selling acid in London before anyone else.’

One friend comments, ‘Nigel and Jenny had a lot of strange and much older friends, like Allen Ginsberg and visiting Beat poets. Involved with Beat poets, happenings and gigs; John Tate, John Esam and Nigel always had acid.’

Another point of distribution was a flat in Cadogan Place, Knightsbridge, where John Doyle and Joe Mellen aided King’s Road groovers in their quests to trip out. Mellen received his first dose from Dutch medical student Bart Huges in Ibiza in early 1965. Huges was a proponent of trepanation, drilling a hole in one’s skull to boost what he described as ‘brain blood volume’. Mellen and Doyle became converts and had the procedure done, an altogether too literal opening of the mind.

LSD opened the floodgates of suggestion. Bizarre ideas ran rampant and took root. Weird robed members of the Mayfair-based Process Church of Final Judgment sold magazines on the street, whose articles trumpeted, ‘Earth is prepared for ultimate devastation… The scene is set.’

Searching for an asthma medicine, chemist Doctor Albert Hoffman synthesized LSD at Sandoz Laboratories in Basel, Switzerland in 1938. The tedious synthesizing of lysergic acid was Hoffman’s job. Lysergic acid diethylamide was the twenty-fifth link in a long chain.

Hoffman discovered that lysergic acid derived from ergot, a poisonous fungus that grew on rye. In the past, hapless villagers had milled, cooked and eaten the fungus along with harvested rye. Working on intuition, 16 April 1943 saw Doctor Hoffman synthesize another batch so powerful he absorbed minute quantities through his fingertips. Hoffman experienced mild hallucinations for the next two hours.

‘The external world became changed as in a dream,’ wrote Hoffman. ‘Objects appeared to gain in relief; assumed unusual dimensions; colours

became more glowing. Even self-perception and sense of time were changed. When eyes were closed, coloured pictures flashed past in a quickly changing kaleidoscope. After a few hours, the not unpleasant inebriation disappeared. What had caused this condition?'

When Hoffman self-administered a stronger dose, he found that within forty minutes he could no longer string together two sentences, let alone continue with lab work. He asked his assistant to escort him home. Once there Hoffman hallucinated for ten hours, with furniture dissolving into geometric patterns that morphed amid dizzying colours. At one point Hoffman was certain he was losing his mind – 'A demon had taken over my body, my senses and my soul. Terrible fear of becoming insane kept me in its grip.'

Once he had overcome his fear, Hoffman enjoyed the LSD trip before falling into a deep sleep. The next day he awoke refreshed. Walking into the cool mountain air, Hoffman felt ecstatic to be alive, like life was unlimited in choices, a first salvo in the questioning of reality versus perception that arose from the use of LSD.

With Hoffman submitting his research to medical journals, word circulated to intellectuals, and other less savoury individuals. By 1951, one hundred articles on LSD had appeared. During the tumult of the late sixties, paranoiacs insisted the CIA was behind this chaos inside youth culture. Declassified documents show that the CIA and US Army, through shadowy fronts, oversaw appalling LSD experiments in military hospitals, drug treatment centres and university research facilities.

At the height of the Cold War, their ostensible aim was to develop a truth serum to use against enemies. British intelligence followed suit in 1953 with experiments on unwitting enlisted soldiers, who were dosed at the top-secret Porton Down facility. Both agencies ended up paying out cash settlements to their damaged victims.

LSD had the curious capacity to act as a vector, in that its powers of suggestion steered the user toward bliss or terror, depending on their mood and situation. Bad trips were few, though unpredictable. In experiments at university psychology departments, many voluntary subjects found LSD to be a miraculous tool for self-knowledge. With knowledge of what dropping LSD entailed growing, experimentation inside a controlled setting had the potential for profound awakenings.

New believers became fervent missionaries, spreading the word to writers, musicians and hipsters eager for the newest ‘kick’.

The drug circulated from research facilities, some of which were more credible than others. After 1953, Sandoz’s entire output went to supply the American government. An alternate source was Spofa, state laboratory of Czechoslovakia, which synthesised LSD from 1963 on.

From Sandoz Laboratories, via his friend John Beresford, Michael Hollingshead, a British cultural attaché in New York, got hold of a gram of LSD – five thousand doses. In 1960, Hollingshead created a near-mythical batch mixed with powdered sugar, dispensed from a jar.

The first LSD proselytizer, Hollingshead’s Manhattan flat was the scene of ‘acid tests’. Those who passed the acid test ‘turned on’ and saw ‘clear light’ that banished ego. Acid – as hipsters called LSD – was an apt term, for acids brought about reactions, but also caused corrosion. LSD was a catalyst for some, kaleidoscopic lark for most, and a plague for a few.

Hollingshead ‘turned on’ Harvard psychologist Doctor Timothy Leary to LSD, giving him a generous dose. Leary seized upon the drug’s potential and began to explore whether the ego-displacement acid caused was useful.

By 1963, author Aldous Huxley, actor Cary Grant, musician George Clinton of Parliament-Funkadelic, author Anaïs Nin, *Time* magazine editor Henry Booth-Luce, Stanley Kubrick and John Coltrane had all tried LSD. Even, some say, American President John F. Kennedy.

Hollingshead dosed jazz musicians Thelonious Monk and Charles Mingus. The effect of LSD on jazz created a sudden surge of extreme free jazz, as radical a shift as bebop had been from swing. Before psychedelia exploded sonic boundaries, free jazz was a minor-scale lysergic eruption.

The use of LSD by the avant-garde paralleled the great change in the arts. The bold expansiveness of pop art, followed by op art and kinetic art, superseded the explosive density of abstract expressionism. The arts turned inside out, focused on action over production. Happenings and performance art took a leaf from 1920s Dadaism and interpreted ‘art’ as an all-encompassing experience where there were no observers, only participants.

A visual, auditory and tactile drug, with unique synaesthesia, LSD catalysed music and the visual arts. Film followed fitfully, though literature remained ill suited, with singularly dire poetry ensuing. A radical synthesis of typography, graphics and poetry surfaced in the print media.

Hollingshead, urged by Leary to 'turn on' British youth, returned to London in September. The ever-enterprising Hollingshead set up his World Psychedelic Centre in Knightsbridge, arranging sessions with a dozen or so people to drop acid, reading from the Tibetan *Book of the Dead* and listening to raga, bossa nova and Alexander Scriabin.

Such a visual drug demanded images to ponder, so Hollingshead outfitted a slide projector to project Tantric yantras, Vedic gods and Tibetan mandalas onto the ceiling. Energy spilled from sessions, with young Chelsea aristocrats Julian and Victoria Ormsby-Gore lounged on Asian pillows next to writer Alex Trocchi, singer Julie Felix, director Roman Polanski and his doomed wife Sharon Tate. William Burroughs and Ian Sommerville talked with painter Sir Roland Penrose, or Donovan and Paul McCartney. All were dosed with LSD or exposed to the literature and philosophy surrounding acid.

At first, the mass media coverage was generally even-handed. In May, the *Times* reported that LSD had shown therapeutic effects in the treatment of alcoholism. 'After the Albert Hall poetry reading,' recalls Peter Whitehead, 'drugs were easy to get. Acid turned up from America. I took it, but mescaline I thought was truly revelatory.'

Exuberant drug-taking took place at Cromwell Road, with sugar cubes impregnated with LSD from a syringe. Soon, these were distributed throughout London. The house became an LSD epicentre – sale, philosophy and use. 'Acid was plentiful,' says Peter Wynne-Willson, 'quite suddenly. It was never a problem to get LSD. John Esam had a supply. There was someone manufacturing acid early on, someone connected with Esam. There were large quantities at Cromwell Road, which someone carried around in a briefcase from room to room.'

From an eyedropper bottle in the refrigerator, a 250-microgram dose of LSD cost £3, though Nigel and Esam often sold it for a quid a cube. 'Esam had acid in liquid form he dispensed with a hypodermic,' explains Hoppy. 'A gram made four thousand 250-microgram trips. Some came

from Sandoz, and Spofa as well. I never dealt in LSD. Soon people were coming from Europe and America all the time with LSD in liquid form, later in tablets. Later, acid dealers dealt acid in crystalline powder. You had to cut powder into capsules. LSD was hard to handle, and absorbed through skin. Before you knew what was happening, you were tripping. Anyone who came into the room would start tripping, the cat would start tripping!'

Hoppy first took acid in spring 1964, weeks before the annual CND Aldermaston march. 'A friend from Cambridge,' says Hoppy, 'a bright guy who had been at Stanford University doing research, phoned and said, "Hello, I'm back in London and I've got something interesting, come and see me." So I went to see him and he said, "Look, there's this stuff, LSD-25, a new drug."

'Five of us took our first trip together. Peter Jenner, Andrew King, my girlfriend Allison and I. We went down to St Ives, to a flat with a great glass picture window. We took this stuff, on sugar cubes wrapped in tinfoil. The person who provided the acid also gave us Aldous Huxley's *Doors of Perception/Heaven and Hell.* Done with seriousness, not as a sacrament, but with due attention to Leary's "set and setting". I'm pleased I'd been set up with a framework so I could understand and relate to it. It's important how you take your first trip; things are never the same afterwards.

'When the Aldermaston March happened, rather than carrying a banner me and some other people ran up and down by the side of the march in Whitehall with signs that had question marks on them. Things were never the same after acid, the great turnover point.'

The doors of perception swung open. 'The strongest information available came from Timothy Leary, entirely positive,' explains David Gale. 'The psychoanalytic implication rather than consciousness-expansion implication was never talked about. The idea you would have a bad trip, which would lead to more bad trips, which would unhinge you, was not popular, considered "uncool". A test of psychedelic manhood or personhood to take trips, survive and have a great time. Most did have a great time, ninety-eight percent of the time.

'A parallel strand was the "anti-psychiatric" school of psychologist R.D. Laing. His book *The Divided Self* was a hot read in our group.

Laing wrote about schizophrenics who had become schizophrenic for reasons besides drugs. Laing did not talk about LSD causing schizophrenia, although the term "psychotomimetic" [a drug that mimics psychosis, including delusions or hallucinations] was current then. So a thought of the psychoanalytic establishment, though not the ravers.'

Barrett returned to Cambridge for the summer, galvanised by Bob Dylan's abstract poetics and tire-slashing Kinks riffs. With its student population departed, the town had an air of ethereal calm. Pink Floyd folded for the holidays and Jenny, who was away, did not see much of Syd.

'The first six months of our relationship was quite intense but I was only fifteen and wanted to cool it, an impossible teenage love affair,' Jenny explains. 'Although we wrote until Easter '66, we didn't see so much of each other after the summer. We continued writing but I wasn't making it down to London to see him and he wasn't coming to Cambridge so much at weekends.' Jenny was still at grammar school and sixteen years old that summer. Syd was nineteen.

Syd resumed his place amid the coffee-house scene and struck up a summer romance with Vivien Brans, later Gilmour's girlfriend. Known by the nickname 'Twig' for her long blonde hair, they enjoyed afternoons at her house, where Vivien's six-year-old nephew Phillip James sat for pen-and-ink drawings by Syd. 'I was told to sit still and I remember he was tall and dark and gave me a pen which didn't work,' recalled James.

Barrett made sketches, poems, and abstract paintings that he gave to Brans. He produced an ink drawing of Vivien with a small poem attached, and wrote several letters, each wrapped in paper. The poem encapsulates this fleeting romance.

Waters rang Syd to tell him Pink Floyd were going to compete in *Melody Maker'*s annual Beat group contest. Syd took the train to Wimbledon. They lost. Later that day, there was another contest at a country club in Belsize Park. They lost that as well. Syd returned to Cambridge while the others headed back to London. None were at all certain that the Pink Floyd Sound would reconvene in the autumn.

By comparison, what was going on with Those Without seemed more promising. On 15 July, Barrett played with Those Without at the Victoria

in Cambridge. For a moment, Those Without ascended to the same level as David Gilmour's Joker's Wild, who packed audiences in every Wednesday at the 'Jive Hive' upstairs at the Vic. Despite the good turnout, this proved to be Syd's final show with Those Without, and his last stand as Cambridge band musician, the future lay in London.

Folk music resonated with echoes from the woods and fields; one reason Syd and his Cambridge friends were so receptive to Bob Dylan. Davey Graham's eclectic *Folk Blues and All Points in Between* from 1965 essayed blues, modern jazz, Moroccan modes, classical and folk – all on one acoustic guitar. Bert Jansch navigated down by 'Black Water Side', taking traditional folk into the modern day. Syd delved into folk and his harmonies, and phrasing took on rustic sophistication.

When the Cambridge Folk Club launched a two-day Folk Festival on 31 July at Cherry Hinton Hall, fourteen hundred people showed up. The Strawberry Hill Boys (later folk-rock band the Strawbs) joined American bluegrass favourite Bill Monroe and the Dubliners. American folkie Paul Simon was low on the bill.

In addition to exploring folk, that summer, Syd also began discovering his inner space. 'William Pryor had been to Paris, someone had given him these brown pills that contained the same drug as morning glory seeds [a lysergamide derivative chemically similar to LSD], which he brought back, and we all took,' recalls Jenny Lesmoir-Gordon. 'David Gale was with us and William Pryor, Nigel and I went completely out of our heads. Then everybody began to take acid and some people would paint their faces.'

Nigel, Jenny, William and David Gale tripped one day on Milton Road. 'We tripped at my mother's house one day when she was away,' explains Nigel. 'The world looked very different – rubbery to start with. William and Jenny became lost a few yards from the door and rang from a phone box, which I could actually see from the house! David started to cycle to Ely. He didn't make it. Jenny cut her hand on my bedroom door. I ended lying on my stomach in the garden, trying not to make sense of it all.' Matthew Scurfield recalled Emo barrelling down to the Mill Pond on his bicycle, stoned out of his mind on morning glory seeds purchased by

the pack-full at Baldwin's Floral Shop, cycling straight into the Cam, to the astonishment of the gathered students.

One summer afternoon, Paul Charrier, Emo and Syd swallowed a packet of morning glory seeds each. They munched the bitter pods until they became nauseous. After the stomach cramps subsided, the 'mystic shining seed' poet John Clare wrote of in *Fairy Things* made their vision wobble and pulse. On bikes, they made their unsteady way on the cycle path along Hills Road to Gale's house. Tuning right on Luard Road, they abandoned the bikes in the gravel driveway and lurched into the house.

'The evidence of strangeness I saw in Syd prior to our moving to London took place in the garden of my parents' house,' remembers Gale. 'Syd and Paul took morning glory together on a summer's day. Paul was ebullient and explosively energetic. He would dash around and laugh when high, as would Syd. This was a key transitional point for Syd.

'It became apparent during the afternoon that he had been holding a plum, orange and matchbox. Syd had them in his hands. His attention gradually devolved from the world around him to studying these objects. That is common enough on psychedelics, which after all gives you that distorted sense of time and space and microscopic vision that makes it seem wonderful. He became engrossed in these three objects.

'Paul started to tease him, saying, "What are you doing with the orange, the plum and the matchbox?" Syd went, "Leave me alone," quite amiably. In the end, Paul seized them and jumped up and down on them. He chased Syd into the bathroom and turned the shower on him. They played like six-year-olds, showering each other with bath water. Syd seemed jerked out of that solipsistic episode. Looking with the benefit of hindsight, you might argue this was an augury.'

Doctor Sam Hutt comments, 'Crushing the objects was a very aggressive and destructive act. Syd rode that one well.'

Barrett showed utter absorption in the three innocuous objects, planets in a psychedelics-induced solar system. Syd subsequently explained that the orange and plum were Jupiter and Saturn, while he was the Sun. The matchbox, God knows.

The drug trip left a physical impression. 'When Syd came back from a visit to Cambridge, something weird had happened with his eyes,' recalls Seamus O'Connell. 'One eye looked deader than the other. We asked him

about it. Though he did not go into detail, he said he had some strange experience in Cambridge, psychic in some way, with seriously druggy people who were part of their group. For a few days, one eye looked dead.'

This suggests a mild brain trauma, often the first physiological sign of impending psychological trouble. An injury that may have left Barrett predisposed to absence seizures. Ocular motor dysfunction is associated with temporal lobe injury and could produce 'spiritual' visions.

Doctor Sam Hutt disagrees. 'This was not brain trauma in a pathological physical sense. Morning glory seed – if you take enough – can make your eyes go weird. There is no evidence of specific brain damage; possible, but conjecture.'

At the Arts Theatre Club in Cambridge, Barrett had a vision. He later confided to Pink Floyd manager Andrew King that he gained profound insight into the inner workings of nature. Nature was bare. One cannot help but recall the Greek philosopher Heraclitus: 'Nature loves to hide itself.' If so, Barrett peeked beyond the veil. Far from pulling King's leg, or indulging in a flight of drug-induced fancy, Syd was adamant that he had a revelation. As he wrote near the end of his life: 'Rationale cannot disprove the existence of a revelation.'

When David Gilmour hitchhiked to the South of France, Syd and friends drove down a week or two later in a battered Land Rover. 'Dave was very straight,' says one friend. 'He didn't even smoke dope. Syd had not taken acid before he went to France.'

Gilmour and Barrett packed acoustic guitars, and made their way to resort town St Tropez. They passed time playing blues, jazz and rock along the way. The duo harmonised on the Dylan-inspired 'You've Got to Hide Your Love Away' and 'Help!' from the new Beatles album.

Having made it to St Tropez, vainly searching for Brigitte Bardot, while guzzling Côtes de Provence *vin rouge*, Gilmour and Barrett sat on street corners playing guitars for fun and the odd franc. Within the hour, police threw the hapless troubadours in a holding cell for not having a licence to play in public. The lads were released with the understanding that they should leave St Tropez at once.

Gilmour recalled, ‘Syd had natural poetic gift for words. He’d effortlessly knock out stuff. All the time you were with him, he’d be punning. When we camped in the south of France, and busked some stuff down there, he’d be extremely sharp-witted. Constant badinage.’

Having found it prudent to leave the coast, they drove north to Paris. In the Land Rover, Syd would play a couple of licks of ‘I’ve Got My Mojo Working’, stick his head out of the window and shout, ‘I’ve got aches in Aix-en-Provence! I’ve stayed too long in Toulon!’

Once there, they raced through the Louvre, like Godard’s Band of Outsiders, and hit quayside bookshops along the Seine. They found Olympia books banned in England; *Naked Lunch* by William Burroughs and the erotic *Story of O*. At a campsite, reading by torchlight, they discussed the relevant saucy bits between bites of bread and cheese. On the ferry back to England, the pair were terrified that customs officials would find the illegal books buried deep in their rucksacks. They didn’t. All in all, they’d had a grand adventure.

As summer ended, Barrett returned to begin his second year at Camberwell. In September, Syd got a room at Seamus O’Connell’s mother Ella’s house in Tottenham Street. Dave Gale joined him later that autumn and they shared a flat in the ramshackle block, off Tottenham Court Road.

In the cold water, twelve-by-eight-foot flat, with bare bones mattresses on either side, Barrett tacked collages and paintings to the walls, as well as pop star pin-ups. An electric fire fed by shillings barely kept them warm as temperatures dropped.

Others from Cambridge, like Mick Clark, shared lodgings there as well, 12 Tottenham Street was home to transient boarders. Emo barrelled down from Cambridge to doss on the floor, and had clear memory of a scavenged dentist’s chair (Gale) and worn psychiatrist’s couch (Syd).

‘Syd and I got a room,’ recalls Gale. ‘Seamus O’Connell was at school with Syd, his mother Ella a strange bohemian lady. She read our palms in her flat. This hideous block full of deranged people. The rent tribunal practically insisted the landlord give it to us free, so dreadful. Syd and I lived in the same room for several months before I moved down to Earlham Street, near Cambridge Circus.

‘And we had a good time. London impressed us, being small-town boys. We got back at the end of separate days and discussed famous people we’d seen in the street. We would award points depending on how famous. I saw Petula Clark in a white sports car and was awarded six points. Syd would see Sandie Shaw and totted up points for the day. That was entertaining. We went to London Zoo and watched a baboon picking shit out of its ass, and eating it, which we found rather compelling. Syd did a marvellous cartoon drawing of a baboon’s ass with this hand picking shit out, pinned to the wall of our hideous room.’

‘Syd was staying with us,’ says Seamus O’Connell. ‘He had a bedsit there. My mother had set up house in this place. Various friends had bedsits there. An appalling place, but an atmosphere. Syd was getting interested in the occult, which my mother was into. She did tarot card readings for him.’

Barrett’s interest in the occult had grown apace and he spent many nights talking to Ella O’Connell about astrology, runes and the like. Barrett pored over Ella’s *Encyclopaedia of the Occult*, in her smoky rooms where textile wall hangings made with her ex-husband hung.

Ella gave Barrett a first edition of Aleister Crowley’s 1929 novel *Moonchild: A Prologue.* (Chapter eighteen is titled ‘The Dark Side of the Moon’.) *Moonchild* tells of a young woman seduced by a white magician into a magical battle. Impregnating the girl with an ethereal moonchild, he leads her on a quest into the occult. Barrett sat in his squalid room and read: ‘Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the Law. I enter the house.’

‘Syd gave me a book of poems called *The Crescent Moon* by Rabindranath Tagore,’ reveals Jenny Spires. ‘Inside it’s transcribed – “To Eve from Marie, Baby songs to help colour the daydreams Feb 14th 1922.”’ Traces of Tagore emerged in Syd’s songs, such as ‘Matilda Mother’.

The Golden Bough (1890) by Sir James George Frazer explored magic, religion, and myths, from cults in India to Druids and Viking lore. Actor and writer Matthew Scurfield pointed to Frazer’s chapter on medieval tree worship as being a keystone to Syd, whose love of nature was imbued with mystical overtones. For Syd, Scurfield felt ‘the trees

would come alive, and have characters and personalities for him. That's in all those little songs.'

The title stemmed from Virgil's *Aeneid*. Trojan hero Aeneas descends to the underworld to ask the Sibyl, prophetess of Apollo, to help him find the spirit of his father. The Sibyl tells Aeneas a golden bough from a tree will allow him to enter the underworld. Frazer proved common threads in myth. A silver branch in Celtic lore opened the fairy realm or sacred groves. Transfixed, Barrett was forever looking for transport to realms 'beyond the bough winds' as he sang.

Syd's mystical bent meant that he delved into deeper undercurrents than many of his rock'n'roll peers. His love of nature and mythology tied him to Albion's pagan past. May Queens, mummers, and the Green Man, the Celtic spirit of vegetation. Trees were believed to have souls and ancient yews in churchyards across Britain (oddly, not in Cambridgeshire) pre-dated churches, pagan symbols of death and rebirth.

Gale remembers Barrett's creative output in London as prolific. 'Syd was very jolly. He made a very good experimental magazine he called *Fart Enjoy*, bits of writing and drawing and painting. Visually, competent indeed, an excellent draftsman. He bound this book in pages of cardboard with strange artwork.'

Andrew Rawlinson stored *Fart Enjoy* for decades. Rawlinson and Barrett corresponded on matters artistic through the post, with Rawlinson posting Syd a booklet he made, for which Syd sent *Fart Enjoy* in return. Split between nursery rhyme and cut-ups, the book is seven sheets of cardboard taped together, a collage of writing sketches and cut-up text images.

In *Mojo*, Rawlinson called *Fart Enjoy*, 'Austere bordering on abstract, and what could be called blazing whimsy.' Rawlinson thought Syd 'experimental, colourful, wide open and right on the button'. On the left were pieces inspired by childhood, simple colourful excerpts from a textbook on structures of flowers, and drawings from *The Tale of Mr Jeremy Fisher* by Beatrix Potter. Syd flipped open his illustrated 1881 publication *Mother Goose, or the Old Nursery Rhymes* by Kate Greenaway, scanned the title page and picked out 'sprat', 'locket' and 'patch'.

Jack *Sprat* could eat no fat
Lucy *Locket*, lost her pocket
Cross *Patch*, lift the latch
Johnny shall have a new bonnet

He wrote from compound glances at random books, seizing the first words he saw. From Dada and the Beats, jazz and cubism, an instant collage as his eyes fell on hard Anglo-Saxon words with a concrete ring, thereby forming a structure.

The right side marked his way from teenager to adult, with concrete poem revolving around the sophomoric phrase 'Boy Fucks Girl'. A topless woman cut from a men's magazine was defaced with words scratched deep through the image.

'Cunt' and 'Tit' parried with a black ink moustache on the woman's lips. Misogynistic adolescent fear and a fascination with naked women. Elsewhere, a preoccupation with someone's failing automobile is evident in cut-up engine block diagrams, with accompanying text musing on the Post Office Tower, built over their heads on Tottenham Road. The right side in dense monochrome, testament to London as the wild wood, and entry into adulthood.

Sketches on the left are Cantabrigian reveries, including a letter from his mother, harking back to childhood river bank memories. The divisions inside Syd made concrete, a cut-up poem showed Barrett interpreted psychologist R.D. Laing's 1960 publication *The Divided Self: An Existential Study in Sanity and Madness* by ripping a page from *A Universal Critical and Pronouncing Dictionary of the English Language*, he then cut and typed text around a collage egg cracking, with Gene Pitney bellowing 'Hallo!' – 'disconnected disjointed disjoined the divided self/ the self divided'. Less prosaically, the spirit in the air was rebirth, with Bob Dylan brandishing signs reading 'Get Born' in his film for 'Subterranean Homesick Blues'. The collage egg cracking could just have easily been spawning a new Syd, in line with the tenor of sixties culture – all power to the individual.

Barrett stood at the border between childhood and the adult world. Between Cambridge and London, pastoral past and accelerated future. The first lines in Laing's book read: 'Schizoid refers to an individual split

in two main ways: a rent in his relation with his world and disruption of his relation with himself.'

Although they had folded for the summer, Pink Floyd picked up again and began doing gigs. Klose's exit meant a dramatic switch for Barrett from rhythm guitarist to lead guitarist who doubled on rhythm, like Townshend of the Who. The vacated rhythm guitar space was filled by Waters, who played bass as lead instrument. Waters and Mason became a rhythm section notable for an aggressive bass pushed to the fore, and loose rolling jazz drums. Just as easily it could switch, with Mason drumming double-time accents and Waters pounding out four-bar bass lines. Syd, the driving orchestrator, cued the others. That said, he was a very laidback leader, prone to leaving executive decisions to Waters.

A gig in October with Gilmour's Joker's Wild saw the Pink Floyd Sound at Byam Shaw School of Art, where Cambridge friend Will Garfitt had them play inside an oversized birdcage as flashing slides formed the crudest of light shows. 'They were called the Pink Floyd Sound originally,' confirmed Gilmour, 'we played gigs with my band in Cambridge and then when we went up to London and played things on their patch, schools. We were friends; I saw them all the time. They just did Bo Diddley numbers.'

Pink Floyd headed to Cambridge in November for a birthday party for Storm Thorgerson's girlfriend Libby, daughter of wealthy Cambridge estate agent Douglas January, who was none too enthusiastic. Joker's Wild and the Pink Floyd Sound played under a big marquee tent set on the Januarys' well-trimmed lawn in Shelford, three miles from town. American folkie from the Union Cellars days, Paul Simon, played a rousing 'Cocaine Blues'. Cambridge Beats sang along, as estate-agent friends and associates watched bemused.

Clive Welham, then in Joker's Wild, recalled, 'Simon was singing songs criticising businessmen to all these wealthy estate agents and they hadn't a clue, applauding wildly. He came on and played a couple of numbers with us; jamming, you might call it.'

Bob Dylan producer Tom Wilson, unknown to Simon, overdubbed an electric band atop 'The Sounds of Silence', from Simon's unsuccessful

1964 album with Art Garfunkel. Within months, the single topped American charts, launching Simon to stardom.

The night ended in drunken goodwill among musicians and bohemian friends. Syd attempted to pull a tablecloth from under plates and glasses. Failing, he sent them smashing to the ground. Older rich folk gaped in disbelief. John Davies remembered that night as the first time he felt a gulf open. Syd's shattering-glass act announced a cultural watershed.

'We began to feel part of a special tribe,' observed Davies. 'This was going to be a fun evening. At one end, oldies and straights were dancing sedately to some local dance band. At the other, hipsters and groovers were surreptitiously smoking a little grass, drinking heavily, and waiting for "our" bands to play. A great evening. We got more and more raucous to the consternation of parents and relatives. I had a distinct feeling the Cambridge "scene" was drawing to a close. The generation gap was never more obvious to me, as was the chasm opening between "us and them" – straight people and hipsters. We knew strange days lay ahead and the future lay in London.'

Pink Floyd performed in odd places; a country house in Esher, Surrey or an RAF base in Northolt, west of London. At Northolt, another band on the bill called the Tea Set cemented the permanent name switch to the Pink Floyd Sound. Jazz and R&B sets were ill-suited for debutantes and soldiers, who expected covers of pop songs, at which Joker's Wild excelled. Gilmour was bored with Cambridge, though. The group splintered when he left for London.

Barrett presented the group with music and lyrics developed in tandem. His deep-rooted interest in fairytales and poetry grafted onto his R&B- and folk-derived guitar work. 'Syd was an exceptional figure,' said Peter Jenner. 'Far and away the most important in the group. He wrote the songs, the singer, he played most solos, and was lead guitarist. Pink Floyd was his band. Much the most interesting, much the most creative. The others were just students. Syd was an artist, whereas the other two were architects and that showed.'

Rick Wright's travels around Greece had opened his ears to unusual scales that were assimilated into his style. Teased by bandmates for melodic lines that sounded like an advertisement for Fry's Turkish Delight chocolate bars, Wright developed his modal style on the Farfisa

organ. He used jazz to introduce modal tonalities to the mix, extending Barrett's soloing and counterpoint. Barrett lay in block chords as Wright soloed. Wright as a melodic foil launched Syd into abstract solos. They harmonised well, their twinned voices possessed of a sympathetic, fine-tuned timbre. 'Rick tuned everybody's guitars. Syd couldn't be bothered, wasn't terribly good at it, but could if he had to,' noted Jenner. 'Roger was tone-deaf and couldn't tune his bass. He wasn't an instinctive musician like Syd.'

Waters made up for this deficiency with a bass seething with primal drive. He bought a Rickenbacker (Rose-Morris RM1999) with his entire term's grant. 'I found if you turned the bass up loud, used a plectrum, and banged it hard, it made strange noises,' he observed. 'Strings against pick-ups made funny clicking noises.'

'The big influence was Syd's writing,' asserted Wright. 'I'd also put a word in for my keyboards and Nick's drumming. Nick was fanatical about Ginger Baker. His style was nothing like today's heavy kick drum and tight snare. All very free and rolling, much more jazz influenced.'

Baker's pioneering double bass drums in the Graham Bond Organisation became a prime influence. Tempo-keeper Mason kept steady time when Wright wandered toward the arrhythmic or Syd hit interstellar overdose. Few would call his style impulsive, for Mason rarely deviated from strict, regularly spaced beats, steady pulses with much room for his bandmates. While syncopation and drum rolls eluded him, Mason kept a constant, pulsing time.

As the group rehearsed and played, they hit promising riffs, glanced up and made mental notes. Gathered together, the riffs extended into rhythmic melodic passages; they built a structure. At the end of 1965, the Pink Floyd sound centred around Asiatic modal organ, jazz percussion flourishes, funny clicking noises on bass and Syd's weird songs.

Barrett and Wright led the improvisational direction as Barrett's blues became astral and whimsical, changing course under the aegis of his influences, a crash collision of books, painting, and music gathered. Syd readied himself to leap forward.

'Hoppy was working as a freelance photographer,' says Joe Boyd, an expatriate American, who produced Pink Floyd's first single. 'I'd been in

Britain in 1964 as tour manager of the Blues and Gospel Caravan, with Muddy Waters and Sister Rosetta Thorpe. Hoppy was assigned to take pictures. I got him tickets and we became friends.'

English audience reaction amazed Boyd. The stars of the Caravan, ignored in their own country, were near-deities in Britain. Boyd was impressed with the maniacal devotion evidenced by those who came to see their hero Muddy Waters.

In November, Joe Boyd returned to England as eclectic independent label Elektra Records' London representative. 'I rang up Hoppy the week I got back. He told me there was going to be literally that night a meeting I ought to attend. So I attended the first meeting of the London Free School.'

Boyd went to Hoppy's Westbourne Terrace flat and joined Andrew King, Peter Jenner, Hoppy's flatmate Alan Beckett (who wrote on experimental music and jazz for the *New Left Review*), Ron Atkins (jazz reviewer for the *Guardian*) and Kate Heliczer for the meeting. Discussion centred on what they could do for the local population in Notting Hill, since they possessed a higher standard of education. Ideas were bandied about to start a newspaper, community centre and school with free classes. Whether middle-class guilt or liberal vanguard, the team had gritty drive to match their idealism.

The London Free School started at 26 Powis Terrace, off Talbot Road in Notting Hill. The building once housed a bevy of prostitutes, fashion designer Ossie Clark, even a Great Train Robber. With walls painted in psychedelic swirls and a dirt-floor cellar that doubled as a classroom, the crew painted and polished the derelict space into shape, installed a paraffin heater, and planned to stay open day and night.

There, underground characters discussed radical psychotherapy, mystic poet William Blake, flying saucers and pyramids. Poet Neil Oram talked about UFOs and ley lines criss-crossing Britain. Landlord John Michell sat writing *The Flying Saucer Vision*, one book to emerge from the underground. Michael X, black power activist, once a slumlord's henchman, was involved, though some blacks in the Grove scorned the bohemians in their midst.

Middle-class intellectual entrepreneurs sped up the underground's growth. Hoppy, Joe Boyd, Jenner and King graduated from Cambridge,

Oxford, or Harvard. Venture capitalists and quasi-criminals, sometimes the same, polite radicals, all aimed to aid and abet the working-class disenfranchised. They announced, 'The Free School hopes to run some local dances, carnivals in the summer, and playgroups for children, street theatre.'

Gatherings in the musty cellar were a forum for local theatre, and legal aid for minorities and drug offenders. A resource for the poor of Notting Hill, the LFS also served as a genesis of the psychedelic underground, with all-night stoned jam sessions and anarchic good times. Peter Wynne-Willson, who became Pink Floyd's lightshow designer, says, 'There were grandiose ideas around. The London Free School never seemed a practical project.'

'The London Free School was a vehicle,' explains Joe Boyd. 'Those involved in the Free School were already doing different things so it was one manifestation of something happening. The important thing was it introduced people to one another: Peter Jenner, Andrew King, Hoppy. The LFS introduced me to Peter and Andrew. We started raising funds. Those money-raising events were a venue where the Pink Floyd played. Maybe from those meetings came the *International Times*, the same people were involved.'

Movements are so often kick-started by those who find the open space to let events unfold. Hoppy became restless waiting for things to happen, and so set about instigating them. The joyous late nights spent with wild blends in a cloud of dope with the hi-fi blasting at his Westbourne Terrace flat were something he wanted to see in public. This was the time of happenings – art events innovative for anarchic structure or an awkward lack thereof. Chance figured strongly, with entertainment being whatever one brought and whatever was there. Happenings were what theorist Marshall McLuhan dubbed an ultra-cool medium requiring much participation from audiences.

Hoppy says, 'An open-ended event where you didn't know what was going to happen, but elements were in place, was very fetching. Many others saw that as well. A bit of this and some of that, smoke going off, coloured lights, and poetry. "Happening" was a good label, because anything could happen. I put on a few happenings, though now you'd call them something else. Happenings were a good umbrella.'

News of events in New York and San Francisco spread in Chinese whispers across the Atlantic, gathering a coat of gloss with every telling, filtering through to London as rumour and legend. Hoppy made an immediate connection with American counterculture when Kate Heliczer arrived from New York underground cinema circles. Heliczer, in Andy Warhol's ultra-underground film *Couch*, had sex on the couch at Warhol's Factory, and appeared in Jack Smith's *Flaming Creatures*. Screening these films in public was to risk arrest.

A strong symbiotic link connected underground scenes in America and Britain, furthered by those like Hoppy who brought ideas from the States. 'We listened to American avant-garde music – John Coltrane and Sonny Rollins, then Ornette Coleman,' he recalls. 'I went to the Newport Jazz Festival because Joe Boyd was working as assistant to organiser George Wein. I got a job from *Melody Maker* taking photos. I saw Cecil Taylor, Carla Bley and Mike Mantler.

'In New York, Archie Shepp gave me a poem for $5. When Ornette Coleman came to London, he stayed at my flat, somewhat nice. Most avant-garde New York jazz musicians appeared on ESP-Disk run by Bernard Stollman. When I visited New York, he gave me a dozen LPs I brought to London. We all sat around listening to them, trying to understand what was going on. The Velvet Underground I had come across through the New York City avant-garde film cultural scene. Kate Heliczer brought a demo tape and we'd often go to bed and listen to it.'

When Heliczer showed up at Hoppy's flat, she brought tapes of the Velvet Underground and had much to tell about underground New York. The Velvet Underground were the musical wing of artist Andy Warhol's Exploding Plastic Inevitable, a multi-media onslaught of the avant-garde based in downtown New York.

Hoppy was galvanised to start an alternative paper like the *Village Voice,* or a school like New York's New School, where an alternative curriculum was taught. 'The part of English culture I was from, and there were many different parts, allowed ourselves to be influenced by American culture,' he observed. 'American Beat poetry and writing – Ferlinghetti, Kerouac, Ginsberg and Burroughs – were formative influences whether you liked them or not. We felt receptive to things

American. Nowadays what America puts into global culture is different, but was leading edge then. Pollination went both ways.

‘American avant-garde cinema had remarkable people: Paolo Lionni, Andy Warhol, Jonas Mekas and Piero Heliczer had impact on those who formed the Filmmakers’ Co-op in London. New York avant-garde was a strong influence on us, whether film, music or behaviour. Fluxus also had many Americans. John Cage was an inspiration from the way he behaved, a hip artist.

‘It wasn’t as if English culture was only in England or American culture only over there, people went back and forth and [there was] an interchange of ideas. We heard about what they were doing and thought, “That’s interesting.” We thought what we were doing was similar. The way it came about was not us sitting and planning a cultural event. Drugs were important as a cultural subset. Personally, looking back, acid was important. Albert Hoffman was one of the most important people of the 20th century.’

Peter Wynne-Willson says, ‘The consciousness-expanding experimental movement was a conviction for many others and me, but not all. Certainly drug related, to what extent drug clouded I could not tell. It would be ludicrous to say we did not take LSD and cannabis for recreation, though always feeling it would lead to a transcendental goal, which might or might not require more drugs. Established mysticism was drawn on and quack mysticism too. No doubt in some cases it did bring people to a spiritual life, though post-drugs I would think.

‘Encountering strangers in your own country or others operating on extremely similar lines was wonderful,’ added Wynne-Willson. ‘Different from the society created by our parents, very different I felt, a condescending view of our parent’s generation. Things we were experiencing we knew they did not have an inkling of. We knew for certain, because many experiences were drug released and one knew our parents hadn’t been into drugs. The philosophical aspect we could be certain they were not party to.’

5. THE WILD WOOD

‘“This must be the wood,” she said thoughtfully to herself, “where things have no names. I wonder what’ll become of my name when I go in. I shouldn’t like to lose it all, because they’d have to give me another, and it would be almost certain to be an ugly one. Then the fun would be trying to find the creature that had got my old name! Just fancy calling everything you met Alice, until one of them answered! Only they wouldn’t at all, if they were wise.”’

Alice’s Adventures Underground

Lewis Carroll, 1886

‘Man has an inner eye with which he can see within himself all the higher regions, when the veil is rent asunder by a competent living Master. In this state, he remains perfectly conscious and undergoes amazing experiences. To ascend to the higher regions without a competent Master is fraught with dangers.’

Man! Know Thyself

Sant Kirpal Singh Ji, 1955

New York filmmaker Steve Stollman landed in London, looking to tap into the British avant-garde and put on events where groups signed to his brother Bernard’s label, ESP-Disk, could launch European tours. ESP was the foremost American avant-garde label. With no pretence at commercial success, covers were hand-pasted and song titles written by hand.

‘The artists alone decide what you will hear on their ESP Disk,’ read each album. With, ‘You never heard such sounds in your life,’ their half-joking motto, ESP counted Pharoah Sanders, Sun Ra and Ornette Coleman among their roster.

‘Steve Stollman was an interesting guy, young and active, moving about in all different circles,’ explains Hoppy. ‘He’d say, “What about this, what about that?” and put on the first event where the Floyd played to the general public, at the Marquee.’

The event, dubbed ‘Spontaneous Underground’ or ‘Trip’, proved the first venue for the psychedelic underground. Stollman booked the Marquee for invite-only, alcohol-free Sunday afternoon ‘happenings’.

A low-key announcement was buried among *Melody Maker*’s pages: ‘a giant mystery happening! By invitation only, limited number available from Marquee. Music, dancing, painting, sculpture, etc., etc.’

On a bleak, cold 30 January, Donovan, AMM, the free jazz Peter Lemer Quintet (who recorded *Local Colours* on ESP-Disk), poets and African singers played. For three shillings, the event promised ‘costume, mask, ethnic, space, Edwardian, Victorian, and hipness generally, face and body makeup certainly’. *Melody Maker* sniffed at ‘highly pretentious nonsense’ and ‘sub-standard beat music’.

For the ‘The Mad Hatter’s Tea Party’ on 27 February, organisers mailed out flyers. ‘A good address list was important, because not everyone had a telephone,’ explains Miles. ‘You would mail fliers and they would tell people. Stollman promoted the Spontaneous Underground with Hoppy’s address list and sent funny envelopes filled with text from Alex Trocchi’s Sigma Portfolio, *Long Hair* magazine and Marvel comics, along with one mimeographed advertisement.’

Stollman and Hoppy posted more envelopes, to be dropped through slots at Cromwell, Earlham and other half-communal flats. From there, word spread across what Hoppy dubbed the ‘fertile crescent’ from World’s End, Chelsea, to South Kensington, Notting Hill and Chalk Farm.

Hoppy’s flyer asked, ‘Who will be there? Poets, Pop singers, hoods, Americans, homosexuals (because they make up ten percent of the population), twenty clowns, jazz musicians, one murderer, sculptors, politicians, and some girls who defy description.’ Such whimsical invites reflect the festive occasion at what would be an otherwise silent club on a Sunday, their ingenuity admirable. Miles smiles, saying, ‘We had to.’

To the *Sunday Times,* Hoppy described the Spontaneous Underground as ‘an absolutely new kind of rave’. The *Times* dubbed him a

‘revolutionary party organiser’. Each session was a giggle that kept building. Whatever would they do next?

Nigel Lesmoir-Gordon says, ‘When we went away that summer Paolo Lionni took the Cromwell Road flat over.’ Lionni, an Italian-American filmmaker, became friends with Beat poet Gregory Corso in Rome and together they migrated to London. Nigel says, ‘A “legalise marijuana” meeting was held in our flat, organised by Steve Abrams, John Esam and Paolo, and publicised all over London. When we got back the police raided the flat.’

Duggie Fields recalls, ‘They had a meeting for legalising marijuana which Velvet Underground singer Nico came to and the police also came to, resulting in pictures in the newspaper of people with eyes blacked out. “Smoking marijuana after midnight!” was the headline.’

Police raided the house on 21 February. A Black Maria van roared up Cromwell Road and policemen turned the flat upside-down searching for LSD that a visitor had tipped them off about. Russell Page, habitué of the Cambridge set, soon to do lights for the Pink Floyd, was holding acid-laced sugar cubes in a bag as police charged upstairs. Page threw them out an open window. A copper waiting in the garden caught the bag. Police seized actor Frederick Klein and John Esam as they were hiding LSD cubes. The trio were arrested and bundled into the van. Peter Wynne-Wilson notes, ‘The police never looked in the briefcase they carried their stash in.’

They were the first people in Britain to be prosecuted for possession of LSD, which Page’s good friend Peter Wynne-Willson asserts ‘was surprising because it wasn’t a listed drug. They couldn’t convict them.’ Despite LSD being legal, Esam was charged with possessing ergot, an ingredient of LSD illegal under the Poisons Act. Newspapers filled with the Flying Squad breaking what the *Times* called a ‘vision of hell’ drug ring. ‘A business of some scale,’ insisted the *Daily Telegraph*. Under questioning, Page told officers he bought sugar cubes for a pound from Esam and re-sold them at 30 shillings.

Page and Esam, charged with conspiracy to distribute LSD, were remanded for a fortnight. Klein fled the country. Prosecutor George Shindler said, ‘LSD-25, which has recently received much publicity, is a

hallucinatory drug. It is an offence to sell it without a prescription. Esam is in touch with people all over the world taking this drug.'

After the Albert Hall poetry reading, Paolo Lionni insisted Miles and John Dunbar meet and do something together. At Bianchi's in Soho, with pop star Marianne Faithfull in tow, they plotted over pasta and wine.

The Indica Gallery and Bookstore opened in February as an outlet for vanguard books and art. Mason's Yard, an enclave of shops and clubs in St James, deep in the heart of the establishment, was close to the West End. St James spelled forbidding power and prestige – with government offices the Houses of Parliament a stone's throw away.

The ultra-hip Robert Fraser Gallery was around the corner on 69 Duke Street, visible from William Burroughs's flat on Duke Street, and Burroughs often stopped in. Paul McCartney designed wrapping paper and installed shelves alongside Pete Brown. With gallery and bookstore painted stark white, artist Nigel Waymouth designed a stark frontage spelling out 'INDICA'.

Miles attended to the ground-level bookshop, while Dunbar set up the gallery downstairs. On shelves backed with silver Mylar, Miles stocked first editions, poetry magazines, and the first legal edition of Burroughs's *Naked Lunch.* Visitors thumbed through the *Psychedelic Review.*

Flyers for events, happenings, art openings and political meetings hung on the walls. American underground newspapers such as New York's *East Village Other* and the *Los Angeles Free Press* sat in bundles by an old Victorian till where Miles rang up purchases with the pull of a lever. A poster of Allen Ginsberg with arms outstretched, in an Uncle Sam striped hat, hung behind – the logo, 'Come Alive!'

In the gallery, John Dunbar organised conceptual art exhibitions. Indica found an immediate audience and coverage in the media. Not everyone liked Indica. Art historian Bryan Robertson described it as 'a silly place where people smoked pot and drank cheap, bad red wine and look at absolute rubbish on the walls – "kinetic" art, and druggy drawings, paintings and sculptures'.

The shop soon became a nerve centre for those who knew the name referred to *cannabis indica* ('a supposed joke', insisted Miles). As evening fell, those who wandered into Indica for a browse ended up chatting to strangers with whom they found much in common.

Next door was the Scotch of St James, an expensive nightclub done up in tartan for pop aristocrats. A DJ booth inside a 19th-century carriage was parked by the tiny dancefloor. Proximity to the Scotch meant pop stars scanned Indica bookshop's shelves for inspiration. Rolling Stone Brian Jones and girlfriend Anita Pallenberg browsed Israel Regardie's *Tree of Life: An Illustrated Study in Magic*, bedecked in velvet, satin and costume-jewel finery.

One night in March, John Lennon came and found Timothy Leary's *The Psychedelic Experience* with passages from *Bardo Thödol*, or Tibetan *Book of the Dead*. The text gave him the first line for 'Tomorrow Never Knows', the explosive closer to the Beatles' masterpiece, *Revolver*.

On 11 March, Pink Floyd played a Rag Ball at the University of Essex. Syd's Cambridge friend Nick Sedgwick secured the gigs. 'We'd already become interested in mixed media,' recalled Roger Waters. 'Some bright spark there had given this paraplegic a film camera and wheeled him round London filming his view. Now they showed it up on screen as we played.'

Aside from Rag Balls, the band were keen to score gigs closer to the epicentre of London's burgeoning underground scene. 'I met Steve Stollman at John Esam's flat, talking about these Sunday-afternoon sessions,' recounts Nigel Lesmoir-Gordon. 'Stollman wanted to bring over avant-jazz bands on his brother's ESP label.' Stollman also looked to book local bands. Nigel suggested Pink Floyd. Nigel laughs, 'So, we got the Pink Floyd to come and play these strange Sunday-afternoon happenings. The Pink Floyd's first big London gigs, so they have me to thank!'

Previous London gigs had not amounted to much. When Nigel talked to Syd, he agreed it was worth a shot. Flyers read: 'TRIP, bring furniture toy prop paper rug paint balloon jumble costume mask robot candle incense ladder wheel light self all others.'

On 13 March, Barrett, Waters, Mason and Wright arrived at the Marquee with rudimentary equipment. Waters said, 'The whole mixed-media thing started happening. A Sunday afternoon at the Marquee with film going and us banging and crashing away. John Hopkins and his

merry men were there.' In a collision of pop and art, mixed media gelled into the underground.

Miles first saw Pink Floyd when he and wife Sue dropped in. Unimpressed by the Floyd, Sue Miles found it difficult to discern a tune amid all the squeaking. Launching off into experimental modes with shattering volume, even the Binson was amplified. Sue whispered to Miles, 'They'll never catch on!' Miles says, 'I wrote the first review of the Pink Floyd for the *East Village Other.*' The group were unaware of their first press cutting until Nick Mason saw a copy while visiting New York in the summer.

Miles, as London correspondent for *EVO* wrote, 'Every Sunday from about 7:00pm till it's over, the Marquee Club in Soho is happening. Nothing is advertised (there are no advertisements), no one is billed, no tickets, about five phone calls are made. Over two hundred people turn up, sometimes many, many more. When they are there, they do things, meet people, *happen*. Unorganised events have included Donovan, in red Cleopatra make-up, singing to one sitar and five conga drummers, AMM in white coats with electronic tapes, films projected onto dancers. The Pink Floyd, surely London's loudest electronic Beat group.'

The BBC turned up with £3,000 worth of strobe lights and gear, filling the venue with snow effects and flames as Pink Floyd played. 'Weird and wonderful,' said Miles. 'An amazing piano solo was played by a chick in very tight white Levi's, a complete *Prelude and Fugue* by Bach to [an] accompaniment of furious drumming and trumpet reveilles. The scene changes every week, it's good.'

The Spontaneous Underground (more colloquially, 'TRIP') provided Pink Floyd's entree into underground London, an impressive leap from art-school dances to the centre of the scene and appreciative crowds. Surprised by their sudden underground success, the band found that they slotted in well. TRIP audiences seemed to be easier-going than pub regulars – Syd's art-school sensibility floundered at the Woodman Pub in Highgate. Nor was their music made for *NME*'s Beat-band poll heats.

Sundays turned multicolour at the Marquee, ushering monochrome mods out the back door. Nick Mason said, 'We may not have been into acid, but certainly understood a happening. We supplied music while people did creative dance, painted faces, or bathed in a giant jelly.'

At the Spontaneous Underground, free-improvisation ensemble AMM performed, testament to the organisers' open ears. A critical encounter for Barrett, AMM's experimental guitarist Keith Rowe proved to be a radical catalyst between what Syd heard on Coltrane and Cage albums and the nasty things the Who did with R&B, with Townshend rubbing his guitar neck on the mic stand; a wide-open field Barrett leapt into, connecting disparate points.

'Keith Rowe did very abstract improvisations with feedback and guitar,' says Joe Boyd. Struck by AMM's bold fusion of avant-garde and free jazz, Boyd signed on as producer. Although Miles liked Pink Floyd, 'I was more impressed by AMM, because I was very keen on John Cage.'

AMM dated from 1965, when Lou Gare (tenor saxophone) and Keith Rowe (guitar) played in the Mike Westbrook Band, an alt-jazz combo that sprang from the art college at Plymouth. Eddie Prévost (percussion) and John Tilbury (piano) soon joined. Others came and went, while Prévost, Rowe and Tilbury performed as a unit for twenty years. AMM played at the Royal College of Art or with the Spontaneous Music Ensemble at the Little Theatre Club in Garrick Yard. Composer and theorist Cornelius Cardew, looking for musicians for his piece *Treatise*, joined their sessions.

'AMM had an intellectual structure to support improvisations,' says Hoppy. 'I knew Cornelius Cardew at Oxford. His starting point was classical music, as opposed to jazz. Cardew leaned toward John Cage and had nothing to do with jazz from beginning to end, a different way of hearing things.' Pete Brown says, 'We did gigs with Cornelius Cardew, good friend of Michael Horovitz and Michael Westbrook. Cardew started off as a John Cage disciple, got into more political areas, then joined with AMM.'

'AMM was always a radical, marginal, improvising group, owned by no one, free and responsible only to ourselves,' asserted Keith Rowe. 'Our heroes were American artists David Tudor, Merce Cunningham, John Cage and Robert Rauschenberg, plus jazz performers like Cecil Taylor.'

Rowe broke down the guitar as a utilitarian tool to make sounds. Not for him chords or notes; he used everyday objects to scrape, attack, rub, and cajole sounds from his helpless instrument. On first seeing Rowe

play an untuned guitar flat on his lap, Barrett sat bolt upright – it was the jump-off point he had been seeking since he first drew his Zippo across amplified guitar strings. The correlation between his painting technique and playing guitar registered at once.

Slide blues, played flat, combined with prepared guitar, like Cage and Tudor's modified pianos. Barrett and Wright, quick to respond, used twin Binson Echorec units to layer chromatic scales and guitar *glissando*, bending perspective through tonality. Pink Floyd struck out in their own direction. 'In June or July of 1966, we'd already started to do things we continued to do,' explained Waters. 'Even though we were still amateur, we stopped playing blues and started thrashing about making stranger noises.'

Miles wrote in *IT*: 'The Floyd were using unconventional techniques: playing guitar with a metal cigarette lighter, rolling ball-bearings down the guitar neck to give an amazing Bo Diddley feedback sound and feedback in continuous controlled waves, complex repeating patterns that took ages before coming round again.'

Rolling steel ball bearings down the neck of the guitar developed from Cage's experiments with prepared piano, though when applied to Keith Rowe's electrified guitar this created controlled feedback. Metal objects and distortion created astonishing squalling guitar and the echo effects that Barrett and post-Syd Floyd both used. A favourite was a butter knife laid flat between guitar strings. The volume and effects were subsequently cranked right up. Tapping the knife sent reverberations in and out of phase.

Effects in Floyd works such as 'Echoes' stemmed from the British free improvisation scene, filtered through Barrett's experiments and onto Gilmour's rigorous applications. Looking to break free of the R&B group template since the Hornsey workshops, Waters, the technical, hands-on, analytical theorist, took note. Barrett, intuitive, spontaneous and instinctual, put experiments in motion applying Rowe's experiments to his variant of slide blues.

'AMM took me places I'd never been,' declares Hoppy. 'I felt awareness of sound. AMM were doing something I'd never heard before, to take music, turn it into sound, take sound, and turn it into music. The boundary between music and sounds in the street dissolved. Rowe

dropped a book on the piano or floor, or if someone came in and slammed the door, that was part of it, or coughed or farted or turned the radio on. Rather like a drug trip, though you did not need drugs. Only three or four people listened when AMM played. In forty-five to sixty minutes, the musicians went through a whole lot of self-expression, relating to each other musically, socially. Then reached a point where it stopped.

'I was excited by this new experience with music and sound. I could relate AMM to the John Cassavetes film *Shadows* I saw at the Academy Cinema, coming out the movie house feeling I was still in the film – continuous. Outside on Oxford Street people walked about and the film seemed to merge with life. With AMM, a wonderful dissolving of boundaries. Any artist or art form that draws you and then dissolves boundaries must be interesting.'

Through Stollman and Hoppy, AMM were booked at the Marquee. 'I remember the Spontaneous Underground gigs,' says Rowe, 'and Stollman. We were happy to play anywhere, we still are!' Outside sympathetic venues, AMM faced confusion and even hostility. Pink Floyd soon ran into the same quandary. 'Promoters would tell us to push off in no uncertain terms,' recalls Rowe, 'on the basis we hadn't played. Aggressive, very abrasive. We'd say, "No, we've played, that is our music," and have to take them to court to get our money.'

AMM took to the Marquee stage dressed as butchers. 'We wore white coats and peaked hats worn in slaughterhouses,' explains Rowe. 'We had "AMM" silk-screened in red on them, like blood. If you give up technique and cannot play melody on guitar because you have the guitar flat, you source melody through radio. I have always used radio in my performance set-up. One side of my body is melody and the other volume attack, the motor side that controls fuzz pedal or echo delay.'

Rowe was serious. Effects, though dissonant, did not spring from anarchic impulse. He applied rigorous methods drawn from the avant-garde and visual arts. 'Radio in our performances, for me, was based on cubism,' continues Rowe. 'We did not want a jazz group with soloist. The philosophical model to get around background/foreground was cubism, where Pablo Picasso or Georges Braque glued cigarette packets or newspaper onto canvas. They took the pot, flowers, apples, and cloth in

the back. A democracy where the cloth was as important as the flower. In jazz, the soloist was the flower. The canvas was the drummer, piano and bass, the back line. How do you integrate these things? My model was analytical cubism. You break all parts and reconstruct them on a democratic even base with no centre point or perspective, but held together by use of tone. And that was quite powerful.'

Moreover, a powerful example for Pink Floyd to follow.

'Laying the guitar flat came from Jackson Pollock, an abandonment of easel technique, with small brush and detail,' Rowe explains. 'When you give that up what you're given in its place is a horizontal canvas you can work on top of and use gravity. If I take a utilitarian object and call it art, it becomes art. By changing context, I change culture. I change the way you look at it.

'I liked the idea that thing you took and called art had an ambiguous feeling. If you took the same object, I could not tell the difference between your object and mine, because they look the same. I liked taking a knife or metal object I knew well, putting it in the guitar strings and hitting it. I was fascinated by, "What do you hear?" Do you hear Keith Rowe playing guitar? Do you hear a guitar, or a knife? I was getting away from ego-driven music. I was interested in developing an ambiguous anti-technique-driven music. Soon you develop an eye and know what to pick up for the guitar.'

Though Jenny Spires and Syd split as a couple after Easter, they remained close. The last gigs Jenny went to with Syd were Spontaneous Underground gigs. By their final date together in April, they had pretty much been going their own way. They stopped writing.

Syd and Jenny's last outing was *Ready Steady Go!*. Pink Floyd auditioned as an 'up and coming band', but didn't get on. They got complimentary tickets instead. '*Ready Steady Go!* was hugely influential and we all watched it,' recalls Spires. 'Syd took me to a *RSG!* show on 8 April, with Cilla Black singing "Alfie". Martha and the Vandellas, the Shangri-Las. Nick Mason went the next week because he saw the Lovin' Spoonful. We saw Lou Christie, and had a great time. Floor managers were holding placards with "CLAP" or "DANCE" on them as we were herded around the studio. Syd and I were jammed near the stage when

Lou Christie came on in a raincoat and did “Lightning Strikes”. I was really into Don Covay’s “See Saw”, and it was great seeing Arthur Alexander.’

The next day, Syd took the train to Cambridge for the Easter break. Jenny Spires says, ‘Syd hadn’t mentioned taking acid to me. I’d have thought he would if he had. I always assumed he’d first taken it in the Easter vacation.’

That night at the Dorothy Ballroom, Syd met Lindsay Corner, former girlfriend of Nick Sedgwick. Like Spires, glamorous blonde Lindsay planned to become a London fashion model. Jenny Lesmoir-Gordon remembers, ‘Syd and Lindsay were in Cambridge when they started seeing each other.’

When the end of term came, Nigel and Jenny took the train to Cambridge. In Nigel’s bag was a glass phial of pharmaceutical LSD. That Easter, Barrett was one of the first in his circle to try LSD. ‘Having left school and hanging out with Syd there arose on the horizon the spectre of LSD,’ Gale recalls. ‘Around this time, all these people from Cambridge began to move to London. We had read about LSD with great excitement. Syd and I were fully conversant with the panoply of LSD values. When LSD came to Cambridge, it was imperative you take acid, whether you wanted to or not. ‘The dosage was high. We were led to believe by Timothy Leary and followers 500 micrograms was the average dose, whereas 250 or less is adequate. At 500 micrograms, an irresistible and powerful surge dropped away from the ego and led you back into the unconscious and world of hallucinations.’

Harvard doctors Leary and Richard Alpert felt LSD was a potent tool for self-transformation. Tests in schools, jails, psychology groups and universities showed – in controlled settings, with preparation and instruction – that this was often the case. Use by the uninitiated had mixed results, an unknown proposition that made one face their unconscious. Driven from Harvard, Leary and Alpert continued acid tests around Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Meanwhile, in the other Cambridge, similar acid testing was conducted, with fun and frivolity ranking higher in the mix than scholastic study. Pioneering English psychedelic experiments took place at the home of a Cambridge biochemist. Alas, the scientist was nine

thousand miles away. ‘My parents went to Australia for six months, leaving me their well-appointed middle-class house,’ recounts Gale. ‘Many people moved in or started to come around the house on a regular basis, much to the alarm of neighbours – quiet, academic middle-class Cambridge types. A certain amount of consciousness-expanding experimentation was held. If LSD today seems a recreational drug, the aura around LSD then was different. Not to say people weren’t hedonistic about it, because they were. It was dignified by saying you were involved in a consciousness-expanding quest for the inner self.’

‘When David Gale’s parents went to Australia, everybody moved in,’ recalls Jenny Lesmoir-Gordon. ‘Nigel did, Johnny Johnson and Paul Charrier. This wild time in Gale’s house turned to chaos. Dave didn’t seem to mind, but his parents did when they got back.’

The Gale house on Luard Road, like a Raj-era colonial manse in the Kashmir, with expansive orchard, was a perfect place to trip. The garden party at Gale’s house continued unabated. Johnnie Gordon and Emo dropped Nigel’s LSD into single sugar cubes, preparing hundreds. As the day wore on, they absorbed LSD through their skin. ‘The acid we took was incredibly powerful,’ says Nigel. ‘Inconceivable to have gone dancing in a club like people do today.’

Barrett’s close friend Paul Charrier, being the most adventurous, was first to try LSD. Gale says, ‘Paul took to cannabis and anything else he could lay his hands on with great enthusiasm. When LSD came along, Paul was first in our group to take it. He came back, a space pilot stepping from the capsule to be clapped and greeted as a hero by assembled bohemians. Paul said you saw God and went to territories that were unbelievable. In quick succession, all of us, Storm, Syd, and many others, including myself, took LSD. We all thought acid was great, although in my case, LSD was also profoundly terrifying. Syd found acid amazing, though.’

‘David Gale didn’t like LSD, and wasn’t keen on it,’ Nigel asserts ‘I certainly tripped with Storm. I didn’t feel like the Pied Piper bringing acid to Cambridge, nor was I aware of spreading acid around. LSD happened simultaneously in London and Cambridge.’

Back in London, the Rolling Stones released *Aftermath* on 15 April. The plaintive faux-Elizabethan airs of 'Lady Jane', delicate with dulcimer, made a strong impression on Syd, stirring him to write mystic acoustic madrigals. The 13 May edition of television show *Thank Your Lucky Stars* saw the Stones lip-synch 'Lady Jane' amid painted Aubrey Beardsley figures. The revolutionary 'Paint It, Black', saw Mick Jagger dancing like Boujeloud – the ancient Moroccan Pan – reincarnated as a Chelsea dandy.

British pop increased in sophistication and visceral, raw edge. All through 1966, a hothouse of constant innovation, as each Beatles, Kinks, Stones and Yardbirds single upped the ante.

The Stones' Beardsley figures were culled from the just opened Beardsley exhibition at the Victoria & Albert Museum in South Kensington. Syd and all his friends saw the exhibition of the 'Fra Angelico of Satanism'. Diaphanous grotesques with pubic hair showing soon had the Obscene Publications Squad aiming to shut the exhibit. One segment of culture surged ahead, while the rear guard kicked up a fuss, obstinately dragging their heels.

Another counter-cultural hotspot opened up at 2 Earlham Street, off Charing Cross Road in Central London. David Gale moved early in the year. 'At Earlham lived Jean-Simone Kaminsky, pornographer and jack-of-all-trades, AWOL from the French army,' recalls Gale. 'When his equipment caught fire, the fire brigade came and found charred pornography in the flat. Kaminsky left and I took over his refurbished room. Earlham Street became another nexus for people to come and stroll about town and meet each other.'

Kaminsky's 'pornography' was bootleg Olympia Press books. The Parisian publisher's backlist was banned in Britain, with William Burroughs and Henry Miller sandwiched amid erotica. Kaminsky printed the kind of erotic tripe nervous businessmen sweaty-palmed in nearby Soho shops.

Wynne-Willson recalls Kaminsky as 'a particularly weird French guy [who] printed clandestine Olympia Press books in the room downstairs. He got to a high quality. He lived with a semi-titled girl, an accomplished illustrator, in the room Syd and Lindsay later had. Also living there were Ponji [John Paul Robinson] from Cambridge, Susie Gawler-Wright and I.

So many people passed through, though. Earlham was a focal point, like Cromwell Road or Egerton Court later. My first acid trip at Earlham was with new flatmates John Whitely and Anna Murray, and Emo from Cambridge. After acid experiences, getting consumed by politics seemed ludicrous.'

Others who came through the CND movement felt the same, as Hoppy's question-mark placard-bearing freaks showed. With the annual Aldermaston March approaching, Miles and Hoppy wanted to take those question marks further. The ninth annual march proved to be the last.

At the end of 1965 Miles and Hoppy published *Long Hair*. Miles says, 'Hoppy and I published something called *Arazt*, with text by William Burroughs, and photos by Hoppy. We had problems getting it printed because Hoppy's photos were of his girlfriend naked. We had the first issue of *Long Hair* done by letterpress, with all illustrations on copperplates. *Long Hair* was a conventional magazine with Allen Ginsberg's piece on Cambodian temples at Angkor Wat. Hoppy and I wrote a long editorial, precursor of *International Times* [their next venture], stating what we believed in. I'm sure it would be very embarrassing to read today. We were on the cusp of literary magazines and what the underground press became.'

They wrote: 'Every day people pour into London to find out what is happening there. True, London is a comparatively free and happy city. It isn't quite as switched on as our admen make out. Things are happening all over the city, but there is a lack of togetherness…

'Most of the 'creative' people in the city, including everyone from paunchy, old artists to vague, smiling acidheads, seem agreed on the need for a change in the quality of living. No one seems to be doing much about it.

'Things have to change, let's shake up this city.'

With a host of contributors, Miles and Hoppy actualised their editorial through new technology, a constant integer in the rapid cycles of the sixties. The American underground press existed due to a new printing technology: offset lithography.

Miles was delighted when Hoppy installed one at his flat. 'You couldn't get stuff printed by offset lithograph because there were only six offset machines in Britain, a new technology. Hoppy bought a small used

offset litho machine for £100. We printed *Long Hair Times,* to see if it worked.'

Content, design, and typography became a free zone. Type could be set anywhere, with graphics. Miles and Hoppy used the freewheeling language of poetry magazines and American underground press. Even the title changed; the *Long Hair Times, Global Moon Edition*. 'We had to do *Long Hair Times* by offset litho, how American underground papers were done,' Miles explains. 'You could do so many more things with photographs, text and illustrations. You could type it and it would print.'

Hoppy and Miles printed five hundred. On 11 April, they took box-loads to the Aldermaston March at Trafalgar Square. Serious politicos hated *Long Hair Times*, though many rank and file marchers loved it. 'Only in a fucked-up country like England can thousands of people march for three days to see a puppet show and go away feeling better,' groused Bradley Martin (Hoppy's *Long Hair Times* pseudonym).

The fourteen-page paper in red and black ink struck an immediate chord. They sold three hundred within an hour, by evening, all five hundred. The paper had 'Fuck for Peace' tucked into the banner head, 'North Atlantic Turn-On' and 'LSD-25' on the front page. Marchers sat around the lion statues at Nelson's Column and devoured its contents: Harry Fainlight on LSD, jazz happenings by Ron Atkins, cartoon 'Sugarman'. Andy Warhol, Velvet Underground and London Free School. Fresh possibilities opened in *Long Hair Times*. Hoppy notes, 'It's a good feeling being in a territory where limits are not well defined, with room for adventure.'

On 13 April, the Sant Mat guru Huzur Charan Singh Ji Maharaj arrived in London. After talks at Caxton Hall, the Master met with followers and the curious alike.

'Around the time of the move to London was an extraordinary schism,' David Gale recalls. 'Our group split into halves. The community taking LSD caused this split – half of them got "god". Paul Charrier learned that a guru in India, the Maharaj Charan Singh Ji, guaranteed if you were initiated into his movement to get you off the wheel of incarnation in three lifetimes, or something like that. I could never see why this was such a good thing, but there we are.'

After a trip on the Norfolk sand dunes, Charrier scoured Cambridge libraries until he found *The Path of the Masters* by Julian Johnson. Sant Mat, or *Radha Soami Satsang,* the Holy Path of the Enlightened Masters, was led by Charan Singh Ji, one of many Indian gurus who went West in the sixties. They arrived to meet great interest in Asian philosophy and religion, and a hunger among youth for spiritual direction.

The 'Master' taught that by attuning to the life current from the heart of god in sound and light, we reach union with our true self, finding joy. The Sant Mat principle of *Surat Shabda Yoga* meant union of the soul with sound current, or audible life stream connected with 'Essence of Absolute Supreme Being'; a dynamic creative energy sent through the ages as vibrating sound from the Supreme Being at the dawn of the universe. Charrier set off for India at once.

Rosemary said of Syd, 'We as teenagers were inquisitive about things and he did think about religion a lot. I remember having a long conversation with him on the train back to London about India and religion, but just teenage curiosity.'

The vanguard of London's latest subculture, driven by LSD and hashish, far removed from the plastic flash of mods and dolly birds, took a sharp turn into the mystic. Drugs prompted many questions, so out came the Ouija boards, *I Ching,* tarot cards, Hindu scriptures, meditation and vegetarianism. A small, consistent parallel culture of pejoratively dubbed 'cranks' was a long established subset of English culture, though they had always been targets for mockery. They espoused nudism, free love, mysticism, séances, and drug taking. Curious by inclination, the intellectual Cambridge coffee-house scene that migrated to London brought alternative views into the open and looked them over. Others were sceptical.

'A strange thing happened, the group split in half,' explains Jenny Lesmoir-Gordon. 'Half of us became *sat sanghis* – as followers of the Master were called – and the other half made it in the world, went to a psychiatrist, or pursued fame and fortune.'

'If you followed his meditative technique, the Master took you through levels like on LSD, and farther,' insists Gale. 'He was available at each level to guide you through multiple temptations. LSD was seen as a crude substance that ripped the top of your head off and exposed you to

a *mélange* of confusing signals from various levels. If you followed the Master, you went on a pure, clean path by following the audible sound current leading you back to the centre of all being, and God.

'Paul Charrier thought all this was dynamite. He had his hair cut off and went to India, where the Master initiated him. Paul described it a blinding bolt of pure white energy flashing through his body, stripping away all the pretence and fear that characterised his life before. He came back, shorn of hair, wearing neat clothes, got a job, stopped taking drugs, stopped drinking, stopped eating meat, persuaded others to go to India. Paul would only consort with people who had been there. He seceded from the group and went to live in the countryside, as did Nigel and Jenny later.'

'Paul had a big influence on Syd,' explains Jenny Lesmoir-Gordon. 'He told Syd about Sant Mat. The first to become a *sat sanghi*, Paul went off to India and came back a different person, quiet, sombre and always wearing a suit.'

Sant Mat guru Karpal Singh's lecture book *Man, Know Thyself* was popular with the Cambridge lot. Barrett sent a copy to Andrew Rawlinson, which had a life-changing effect for the recipient. 'Syd came round Cromwell Road and said he wasn't going to drink or smoke dope anymore,' recalls Jenny Lesmoir-Gordon. 'I encouraged him to smoke dope, so perhaps he hadn't then asked for initiation. Syd said he was definitely looking to. Storm and Syd went to see the Master at an audience in London. Syd very much wanted to become a *sat sanghi* but was refused. Everyone that wanted to be accepted into Sant Mat was, except for Syd. Mick Clarke, living with Syd in Tottenham Street, said Syd was very upset.'

Storm went out of curiosity, though Syd sought initiation. They crossed St James's Park for an audience with the Master at Jolly St Ermin's Hotel. The guru said Barrett was too young and not ready.

'Initiates had to forswear alcohol or drugs. In the interview, Syd might have candidly let on he might have difficulty with this. That could have contributed to his being turned down. Or, if one prefers, the guru might have seen what was ahead for Syd,' observes Nigel.

The Master recommended that Syd concentrate on finishing his studies and that he stop taking drugs. Syd, disappointed, asked twice,

though the Master indicated a negative response by shaking his head. Syd affected indifference, but a maelstrom brewed beneath Barrett's placid, happy-go-lucky exterior. Drugs and his mystic revelation back home left unresolved questions floating through his mind.

'The Cambridge group split right in half; followers of the Master and followers of another path,' confirms Gale. 'Syd wavered between the spiritual group and the other group, interested in psychoanalysis and experimental art culture. More hedonistic and less spiritual, they tended to want to hang out more, to continue to socialise. After wavering, Syd fairly firmly joined the latter group.

'Around the time of this schism, mental instability emerged. Not with Syd, but with ordinary people who took LSD, one in particular, a guy named Cred, ex-services. When he came down Cred joined a fundamentalist Christian sect and was never seen again. LSD was not straightforward in what it did to people. LSD didn't simply open your mind and make life marvellous, there was evidence of strangeness.'

Wynne-Willson says, 'Psychological risk was part of the interest and excitement LSD generated. Acid wasn't a panacea. If you didn't get your head in the right space, you would certainly have trouble.'

Russell Page and John Esam returned to court, charged with unlawfully selling the drugs LSD and DMT between June 1965 and February 1966 – the charge indicative of just how long they had been under surveillance. Esam and Page pled not guilty. Esam said, 'Until you have used this stuff [LSD] properly you do not know how exhilarating it can be.' Bail was renewed.

Unwelcome attention followed when the BBC filmed Hoppy, Stollman, and Kate Heliczer at a Chelsea acid test. Tipped off, the *Sunday People* issued such an outcry that the BBC cancelled the documentary. In March, *London Life* magazine exposed the 'tragic effects of LSD'. Soon, the *People* screamed, 'By far the most dangerous drug ever to become easily obtainable on the black market. *It is, in fact, a killer drug*. We have obtained evidence of "LSD parties" being held in London.'

When undercover police drank LSD-spiked punch at Hollingshead's World Psychedelic Centre in Pont Street, Chelsea, the stage was set for

his bust. Hollingshead hosted ‘An Evening of Psychedelics’ with trips and lectures for all takers, all food and drink being spiked with LSD. In bravado laced with misfortune, Hollingshead dosed the two police officers. Miles wrote in *EVO* of ‘people nodding out on overdoses and some flipping completely to be found later wandering in the streets thinking they had gone mad’.

Hollingshead was arrested above the centre, along with a writer, physician, company director, an art dealer and his wife. Although LSD was legal, Hollingshead was accused of allowing his premises ‘to be used for the consumption of drugs’. The others were charged with ‘unauthorised possession of *cannabis sativa* (Indian hemp)’. In May, Hollingshead was sentenced to a severe twenty-one months in prison.

Bob Dylan’s *Blonde on Blonde* album arrived the same month that Hollingshead was imprisoned. The background sound of that summer, Dylan said of the disc, ‘The closest I ever got to the sound I hear in my mind. That thin, that wild mercury sound. Metallic and bright gold, with whatever that conjures up.’

The return of Dylan to the Royal Albert Hall on 26-27 May, as an electrified amphetamine Hamlet, witnessed epochal concerts. In the first half, a solo Dylan, presumably well stewed on London’s ample supply of intoxicants and armed with acoustic guitar, sang strange sibilant renditions, endlessly tuning as provocation, hissing and lisping words. (‘I’d like to dedicate this one to the Taj Mahal.’) His harmonica, like a siren at sea, was abrasive and melodic all at once. After the intermission, Dylan and the Hawks abandoned acoustic folk for thunderous rock. Trenchant folk purists stormed out or gave Dylan an insulting slow handclap as the Rolling Stones and the Beatles applauded from boxes above the stage.

Earnest folkies, like mods and swinging London, were on the wane. Bohemian enclaves and Dylan shows stirred a feeling in the air that gathered momentum all summer. As people moved inside and out of their own circles with greater frequency, the underground came alive.

A warm spring surged into a hot summer that flowered in unexpectedly bright hues. The World Cup victory of the English football

team over West Germany on 30 July saw people splashing in fountains at Trafalgar Square long after midnight.

Syd soaked in diverse offerings on pirate radio. Radio London and Caroline buzzed with ‘Paperback Writer’, the Yardbirds’ ‘Over Under Sideways Down’, Ike & Tina Turner’s ‘River Deep Mountain High’, ‘Don’t Bring Me Down’ by the Animals, and Dylan’s ‘Rainy Day Women #12 & 35’.

Acid, hash and opium electrified the summer air. Drug busts rose in frequency, with penalties so severe that possession of one joint of cannabis could mean two years in prison, even for first-time offenders.

In July, Donovan was the first pop star busted for possession of cannabis. He was escorted to Marylebone police station, booked, finger-printed and given a cup of tea. This, after the Scottish singer and his girlfriend had half their flat destroyed. Nine policemen seized Donovan by the throat, dragged him naked from his bed, put him in an arm lock and dropped him to the ground before dragging him to a holding cell.

Even then, there were concerns about the effects of LSD. Ginsberg wrote to Leary after a London trip, ‘One must be careful of altitude sickness and depth madness and the bends, hazards of the silent world. Space is silent, remember.’

As English newspapers filled with reports on LSD, vicars and the Home Secretary called for the drug to be banned. In July, a seaman’s strike put a chokehold on hash entry to the capital, to the extent that even a joint was difficult to procure from supposed ‘coloured drug peddlers’. ‘The Summer of Love in Britain was really in 1966. Syd was very much a part of that,’ asserts Miles.

Poised to become an underground figurehead, Syd Barrett’s adoption by London’s beautiful people began with a move to Earlham Street.

Situated a block from Seven Dials, where streets radiated from a circular plaza, Earlham Street was a perfect jump-off point for the West End, the entertainment heart of London; with theatres, bookstores, and music shops within walking distance. Blocks away, cinemas ringed Leicester Square. The Academy Cinema on Oxford Street showed experimental films. With Indica’s new premises walkable from Syd’s

door, he stopped in to buy a copy of *I Ching* for his new flatmate Anna Murray.

Another way station for Cambridge exiles, a front door painted purple opened onto rickety wooden stairs to small rooms. The wooden ceilings and rough-plastered walls offered few creature comforts, though young bohemians created a vibrant atmosphere in the four-storey building. When David Gale moved out, Syd and Lindsay Corner took over his room.

The pair, an on-off couple since Easter, began living together and settled into as steady a relationship as the freewheeling underground mores allowed. 'Like Syd, Lindsay also had a dazzling smile,' Peter Wynne-Willson recalls. 'Extremely kind, generous of sprit, and incredibly beautiful, Lindsay was not pursuing any spiritual scene.'

Barrett and his peers idealised experimental approaches – living together, forming informal collectives, and practising open relationships. They tripped through swirling events. The underground grappled with 'free love', a perennial standby in bohemia past and present, which in the sixties reached apotheosis. With the relative absence of risk of pregnancy and venereal disease reduced to nuisance, sex charged the air.

Syd and Lindsay moved to the attic room. Four narrow windows opened onto the hubbub below. Syd did up their room in ascetic style, with straw matting, after reading an account of John Cage's Spartan quarters. Lindsay, in turn, brought profuse flashing colours into their living space.

Syd's Earlham flatmates were into art, music, film, drugs, technology and life. John Whitely and Anna Murray lived downstairs, often listening with Syd and Lindsay to Coltrane's *Ascension* and Ravi Shankar's *Three Ragas,* ascending and descending in modes that went on for twenty minutes or more. Sheets of sound flowed over one chord using tones not associated with the chord, filling space, in contrast to sparse modal jazz. From raga, 'colour' or 'mood' in Sanskrit, Syd adapted Shankar's string bends to bluesman Albert King's double-string bends. Coltrane, galvanised by the free jazz movement, rocketed into the stratosphere with two monolithic LPs that stretched out at expansive length.

Anna Murray, also a painter, became good platonic friends with Syd, telling author John Cavanagh, 'Music hardly ever came up. Getting

stoned, going to the park, go for walks, look at trees. We went to art galleries, looked at paintings and talked about art often. Syd was very interested in mythology.' He thumbed through Robert Graves's *The Greek Myths* and Fraser's *The Golden Bough* between painting and writing songs.

A vibrant upper middle-class couple had the adjoining room up top. Peter Wynne-Willson and Susie Gawler-Wright were scions of the lower rungs of English aristocracy. Neither titled nor wealthy, Wynne-Willson built beds in their flat. Interested in making gadgets that reacted to sound and light, he scrounged discarded odds-and-ends from work at a West End theatre. Vivacious Susie was an It Girl of 1966, and a Sant Mat devotee. 'I first met Syd when he came to live in Earlham,' says Wynne-Willson. 'He was with Lindsay, but Jenny Spires was around. Syd had this musical and poetic gift. He did not stand out from [the] very interesting people around.'

Jenny Spires says, 'I moved to London in late August. Syd and I stayed friends, and he had just moved into Earlham with Lindsay. I visited them, and linked up with Cambridge people. I later moved into a room in that house too. Syd was always affectionate and caring through all the time I was in contact with him over the years. He had a very generous personality. I was very fond of him.'

At Earlham Street, Barrett had the most explosive creative outpouring of his life. In six months, he wrote almost all of his songs. His interest in Eastern mysticism also grew in Earlham's hive. To a backdrop of free jazz, raga and rock, Syd and Lindsay played long-running games of ancient Chinese board game *Go* with flatmates. An element of a shared interest in all things Asian, in *Go*, not unlike chess, pieces are limited in where they can move, though sheer combinations create certain static mobility and multi-tiered dimensions. Barrett's skill at patterns meant he often won.

Go's lateral moves through space-time reflected in his mystical songs. Barrett said, '"Chapter 24" was from *I Ching*, there was someone around who was very into that, and most of the words came straight off that.' Noting its prophetic tone, he said, 'It didn't mean much to me at the time. Then three or four months later it came to mean a lot.'

Visitor Carol Lancaster shared Barrett's fascination with *I Ching*. She and Syd threw the coins, looking for direction through the haze of events that grew by day in intensity. 'A lot of *I Ching* was going on, Syd threw it quite a bit,' Wynne-Willson recalls. 'He would focus on songwriting to the exclusion of other things, sometimes with the inclusion of things like *I Ching*.'

Scholar Richard Wilhelm's translation of *I Ching* was esoteric reading, not yet assimilated into popular culture, the first English language paperback edition came in 1960. Chapter 24 formed a central text in Barrett's cosmology, predicting his ascent and descent with accuracy.

I Ching had much to do with probability and chance. Syd was intrigued. Like computers, *I Ching* used binary code. Told in parables, readings were conjured by the chance throwing of two copper coins. Lines formed a hexagram, pointing to a chapter for the day's forecast, ambiguous to the edge of suggestion. *I Ching* proved critical for Barrett, who was struck by Chapter 24 – *fù* in Chinese, or 'Returning', dealt with a turning point. Syd was at one: 'The bright quality will be developed brighter and brighter from day to day, and month to month.' A road map to his destiny, Barrett was on a quest.

The underground at large was enamoured of the occult. Themes in Barrett's songs amply convey this. With interpretation a key in deciphering the thin, fragmented lines of *I Ching*, Barrett's readings contained subtle differences. Barrett borrowed one critical line from Wilhelm's commentary: 'Things cannot be destroyed once and for all.' Musing on immutable energy, Barrett defined energy and nature as one. 'When what is above is completely split apart, it returns below.'

Syd sidestepped a warning of 'danger in continually deserting the good because of uncontrolled desires'. Repeated returns marked danger. Missing the right time, pushing against cyclic return, caused terrible misfortune. Wilhelm cautioned, 'The misfortune has its inner cause in a wrong attitude toward the world.' Barrett avoided the warning, preferring rising action. Rise he did, writing songs that reflected and refracted the shared interests at Earlham Street.

While Barrett and Lindsay made the scene in London, Mason was off to America. Wright and Waters joined Nigel and Jenny on the isle of Patmos in the Greek Archipelago. ‘We went to Patmos with Roger Waters and his girlfriend Judy Trim, Rick Wright, Russell Page and David Gale,’ Jenny confirms.

There, Rick and Roger first took acid. Nigel gave them the standard 500-microgram dose. Waters and Wright were stunned. Nigel, walking to the beach, found Wright with knees hunched, rigid like a stone, staring into the sunset. Waters tripped for two days, at one point he was rooted at a window for hours. One of just two trips either took, Waters told the *Daily Mirror*, ‘Very pure. We got access to the real thing, quite extraordinary. Amazing to have your aural and visual perceptions overturned like that – but so what?’ Waters insisted that LSD had no effect on his music. ‘I didn’t ever take a trip with Rick,’ Wynne-Willson declares. ‘I’m sure he would have taken acid. Rick smoked, quite a lot, but he was introverted. Roger smoked, but only as an adjunct to alcohol.’

‘None of them did drugs when I met them, except Syd. He only smoked dope,’ recalled Jenner. ‘Then with the “Summer of Love” and all that bollocks, Syd got enthusiastic about acid. He got into the religious aspect, which I never did. The others were much more into half-a-pint of bitter than drugs. One reason I got on with Syd was he and I smoked pot together.’

Barrett and Lindsay returned to Cambridge in the summer of 1966, and the antics from the Easter break continued where they had left off. They spent time with Emo, Pip and Fizz, gazing through trees, clambering through creeping moss and lazing in the foggy dew by the river. At Syd’s house, they listened to the Rolling Stones and modern jazz.

Back from Greece, Jenny and Nigel joined Syd, Dave Gale, Russell Page, Andrew Rawlinson and Lucy Raverat on a nature trip. Dosed with Nigel’s LSD, they trouped to the Gog Magog Hills and childhood haunts west of Wandlebury, where the Cherry Hinton Chalk Pits are.

Venturing to nearby quarries, they found hallucinatory *psilocybe* mushrooms scattered through undergrowth where Syd’s father had once collected specimens on weekend jaunts.

Nigel Lesmoir-Gordon shot a jumpy, abstract film on an eight-millimetre camera borrowed from college. In the abandoned quarry Gordon filmed a beaming Barrett clowning with mushrooms on his eyes, scrambling across rocks and looning in the grass as white butterflies fluttered around him. ‘Syd had short hair and his black raincoat,’ Jenny remembers. ‘He looked ordinary before he started to grow his hair, and was still down-to-earth. We did all take that trip, and Syd and I were worried because Russell, David and Nigel were all making a bonfire. We thought it was uncool and were scared.’ Nigel adds, ‘Syd looked wide-eyed and slightly vulnerable.’ The film saw Barrett by turns restless and wrapped in his own imaginings, a subtle foreshadowing.

The summer experiments with LSD, in progression from cannabis-fuelled antics, were a bound into the unknown. Literature was scant and possible long-term effects uncertain. After-effects were conjecture, with murmurs of ‘bad trips’ and ‘freak-outs’. Dosages were guesswork – even Leary and Alpert were neophytes. ‘We were all seeking higher elevation and wanted everyone to experience this incredible drug,’ Nigel recalled. ‘Syd was self-obsessed and uptight in many ways so we thought it was a good idea. I don’t think he was equipped to deal with the experience because he was unstable to begin with. Syd was a simple person, having profound experiences he found hard to deal with.’

At first, LSD was a Pandora’s Box of delights and starry heights for Syd. Author Aldous Huxley termed psychedelics ‘heaven and hell’ drugs to add caution in application and use. LSD defied explanation – a flurry of revelations and dimensions impossible to capture. Surging effervescent trips seemed to propel one forward. A rupture in reality.

LSD stirred strange days. David Gale recalls the night they all set out in John Davies’s 1935 Morris Eight Tourer: ‘Outside Cambridge, an old Roman road runs through the countryside, a mile beyond where Syd lived, on the edge of town. We drove to the Roman roads one night, four or five of us in a car, including Syd. We were driving in the middle of the night on a bumpy country track. We suddenly came across what looked like some strange black magic ritual. Crosses driven into the earth with curious things on them. I had a vague impression of a cloaked figure standing there. We screamed and drove very fast away back to Cambridge and the warmth of our own households. I don’t know what

we saw on the road that night. Whether more than a bush with an old coat, I'll never know. People were doing massively powerful things to personality structures with mind-altering drugs. Nobody knew the implications.'

Will Garfitt, of Cambridge band Four Posters, recalled riding in Syd's little Austin A30. Driving at a crawl, Garfitt asked Syd to speed up, Barrett shook his head. 'I'm too young to die; I've got too much to give to the world. We'll have to drive at my speed or not at all.'

'When he had an idea for a painting, he was very careful crossing the road because he had to make sure he did it,' explains Rosemary. 'The need to express himself through art was extreme.'

That summer, Barrett fell ill with glandular fever. Friends came around to keep him company. Lindsay created a beautiful 'get well' decoration from a sprig of 'Honesty', writing tiny endearments on the translucent seedpods. David Gilmour came by, playing guitar with Syd as he recovered.

When an offer to play in Spain arose, Gilmour recruited drummer John 'Willie' Wilson and bassist David Altham from the disbanded Joker's Wild. Together, they took off to Marbella and then gigged all round France under the name Bullitt.

For Syd, the enforced break proved useful. He lay in bed, drawing, or playing guitar, as Winifred nursed him back to health. As the dulcet tones of 'Lady Jane' wafted through the room, Barrett wrote songs like 'Flaming', filled with what Allen Ginsberg called 'mystical visions and cosmic vibrations'. Syd lay in bed in light delirium, with windows open to starlit skies over Hills Road and the silent stone town. Recovering, he smoked spliffs, the smoke rising in blissful fragrance on walks down Grantchester Grind.

Barrett sang to his giggling, stoned friends splayed on grass at the Mill Pond. In a summer of sweet delights straight from a Romantic poem, they stood on Clare Bridge and watched shadows trailing in waters below. Barrett thumbed through Francis James Child's *English and Scottish Popular Ballads*. Syd skimmed pages, picking a word here or there, selecting cadence and meter.

Barrett was inspired by Old English poetry, where each line is split into half-lines with strategic breaks or pauses. Accented syllables trigger

specific emphasis, cementing the tone. In Anglo-Saxon poetry, structural emphasis comes in accentual meter (or alliterative-stress meter). In *A Study of English Rhyme*, Francis Child wrote, 'There are (usually) two alliterations in the first line and one at the beginning of the second line. Alliteration is the domestic artifice of Teutonic poetry, as rhyme and assonance are of the Romanesque.'

Barrett, always the man on the border, straddles the two. Author Tim Ellison notes, 'Not just discontinuity between lines, but continual lack of logical structure within individual lines themselves.' Lines themselves form structure, words less so.

The *Child Ballads* were three hundred and five ballads from England and Scotland, with American variants, collected by American folklorist Francis James Child between 1882 and 1898. The ballads were rife with romance, the supernatural, riddles, murder, and folk heroes, and heavily revisited during the folk revival. Syd skimmed the ballads, picking out words, adopting fragments, compounding them into lyrics. 'Riddles Wisely Expounded' and 'The Foggy Dew' were two that showed up in his new songs. Barrett loved ballads about fairies, elves, water-spirits, enchantment, and ghostly apparitions, in addition to tragic love ballads. Unlike earnest twanging folk, the *Child Ballads* had a raw, gritty edge amid fantasy and romanticism. For every knight-errant were tales of sisters drowning each other.

Back in London, Syd and Lindsay spun round the King's Road, axis and main thoroughfare of the old bohemian borough of Chelsea. They jumped off the tube at Sloane Square and walked leisurely down to World's End, taking in bistros and boutiques. Fashionable young people crowded sidewalks at weekends, parading in finery on radiant days. The underground embraced the dressing-up ethos and spawned exemplary outfitters. Though 'hippy' later came to mean dreary, washed-out tie-dyes, dirty jeans and matted hair, underground fashion flowered in flamboyance and extravagance.

With Mary Quant's Bazaar and Barbara Hulanicki's Biba well established and synonymous with swinging London, fresh designs were afoot. Several young designers, branching out from more esoteric Carnaby Street designs, began purveying 'threads' to 'freaks'. They cast

off dour and grey post-war drabness in a fashion explosion not seen since the Regency.

At Vernon Lambert and Adrian Emmerton's stall in Chelsea Antiques Market, at 253 King's Road, Jenny Spires and Lindsay shopped for old velvet jackets and twenties chic. They rummaged in stalls looking for small antique silver jewellery and belt buckles. When the models arrived in London, Biba and Quant were still very much in fashion. Street fashion was different, though. Most people still wore jeans.

Mods had moved into Carnaby Street, and by 1966 the street market in Portobello Road was where to go for Lord Kitchener military coats. King's Road had various little antique markets and Granny's bloomed in the World's End. Soon, people wore velvet and satin, floral shirts and jackets. At Alice Pollock's Quorum, brilliant designers Ossie Clark and his wife Celia Birtwell reigned.

Chelsea socialite Michael Rainey worked at Quorum before he opened his boutique, Hung on You, in the winter of 1965, catering to Chelsea aristocrats and pop stars who wanted a loose cut and bright colours to fit their expanded consciousness. Grey, brown and black were supplanted by bewitching puce, magenta, turquoise and yellow. 'A super charade of happy happenings,' sniffed one news clip.

When Hung on You moved to 430 King's Road, a proto-psychedelic fronting by painter Michael English saw yellow and purple lines blazing outward. Rainey introduced carnival colours to menswear down a narrow staircase, in a dark room with black and magenta rays up the walls and across the ceiling.

Nigel Waymouth, with partners Sheila Cohen and John Pearse, opened Granny Takes a Trip at the end of 488 King's Road. A psychedelic yellow-and-purple awning puzzled Chelsea football fans marching to Stamford Bridge for home matches on Saturdays. When they threw rocks, Waymouth redid the entire frontage in pop art Jean Harlow with kissing lips. The Chelsea boys had less of a problem with that.

Inside, past glass beaded curtains, hung clothes they designed or rescued from the Chelsea antiques market up the road. Buying antique military waistcoats, lace dresses and hats, designers augmented them with satin, silk and velvet detailing. Androgynous and flowery, Granny's clobber shocked, with wide lapels and yellow pinstripes, flowing silks

and velvets. Scarves draped across an old wind up gramophone played ‘Me and My Chauffeur Blues’ by Memphis Minnie.

Granny’s style mixed mod tailoring (Pearse), gothic decadence (Cohen) and freak zest (Waymouth). The shop was thronged with rock stars and revellers despite the exorbitant cost of shopping there. Granny’s owners were so ‘cool’ that they refused to talk to customers who did not match up to their idea of what was hip.

Dandie Fashions at 161 King’s Road opened in November, brainchild of the Honourable Tara Browne, an heir to the Guinness fortune, and his partner Neil Winterbotham. Though Guinness died by year’s end, Dandie continued. Jimi Hendrix and many other rock stars shopped there, with Hendrix acquiring a shimmering red silk jacket printed with roses.

Browne commissioned London design team Binder Edwards & Vaughan to paint the shop’s façade. Dudley Edwards recalls ‘working on shop fronts we painted on boards using interior premises as [a] makeshift studio – unless working onto the facade’. The team painted an art-deco frontage in psychedelic colours.

Underground groovers were as clothes conscious as mods, though less constrained in their choice of colours, cuts and materials. The immaculate tailored three-button suits, Chelsea winkle-picker boots, strict monochrome, and stylised haircuts of the mod were in stark contrast to the bright excess of underground clothes, with generous cuts, bizarre prints, satin, silk and velvet materials and vibrant colours.

By 1966, some bright mods went off the rails as barbiturates and alcohol chased amphetamine jitters, running hot and cold until they were left at a permanent medium cool. Among them was ace-face Peter Meaden, who coined the mod credo, ‘Clean living under difficult circumstances,’ as excess pursuit of the former led to surfeit of the latter. ‘Smashed and blocked’ gave way to ‘spaced and groovy’.

The underground exhibited a curious nostalgia, unusual in people so young. Living in tattered Victorian flats, smoking dope and rummaging for antiques on the Portobello Road, the underground pillaged their cultural history. Part romantics and part vandals, as they pulled away from their parents’ world, they embraced the shadow of their grandparents’ Victoriana, torn between an idealised future and rose-tinted visions of the past.

Barrett's music was well in line with this duality. Nostalgia and futurism, romanticism and modernism, and space rock versus jug band blues. Barrett stood at the crossroads of past and future, not only his own, but those of a culture in flux.

Pink Floyd still played Bo Diddley covers, with several of Syd's songs thrown in, though they soon jettisoned R&B as the group began a profound shift, with Syd's songs and guitar coming to the fore. Barrett and the Floyd drew out covers of 'Roadrunner' with 'freak-out' explorations, as Syd looked farther afield for new music, eager to expand his horizons.

In July, a stack of American albums landed in his lap. Barrett told *Melody Maker*'s Chris Welch: 'I really dig the Byrds, Mothers of Invention and the Fugs. We have drawn quite a bit from those groups.' Miles remembers that Syd strolled into Indica to buy *The Village Fugs* by the ultra-underground New York group. 'The only album we carried,' he adds.

Ragged and energetic, the Fugs were fronted by post-Beat poets Ed Sanders and Tuli Kupferberg. Ginsberg gave Miles the address of Sanders's Peace Eye bookshop. Soon Sanders sent over his *Peace Eye Poems* and the charmingly titled *Fuck You: A Magazine of the Arts*. In return Miles sent Sanders books such as 101 Cromwell Road resident George Andrews's *The Book of Grass.*

The Fugs' mixture of anarchic Lower East Side wit and sophomoric satire appealed to Barrett's odd humour. With titles like 'Kill for Peace' and 'Slum Goddess', the band's free-spirited underground vibe, made by and for street freaks, rang true to Barrett. The Fugs found expression in his last works with Pink Floyd, where he penned a tragicomic rant directed at any and all.

The Fugs were a perfect departure from blues and folk into the sort of driving street Beat poetry that was enshrined in 'Group Grope' and 'Skin Flowers'. Poems by English poets William Blake and Algernon Charles Swinburne were set to strident music. The Fugs, like Frank Zappa, wrapped biting satire in sophomoric humour.

Zappa and the Mothers of Invention's *Freak Out* linked pop, avant-garde classical, and free jazz, though a mixture of absurdity and technically proficient music. Frank Zappa made merry with pop chart

fodder, using snide humour, while bringing in dissonance and fifties doo-wop vocals. Barrett mused on Zappa's aphorisms 'the reason for playing is to find out what I want to play' and 'every noise has a note'. An astonishingly ugly band, dancers and freaks followed the Mothers at shows, among the first Los Angeles hippies. Miles noted that the London underground connected with underground Los Angeles rock via Love, the Doors, Zappa's Mothers and the Byrds.

Barrett's love of the massed spiky guitars on the coda of the Byrds' 'Eight Miles High' (from their album *Fifth Dimension*) became evident as he adapted the track wholesale for 'Let's Roll Another'. Syd also borrowed the dirge-like incantation from 'I Come and Stand at Every Door' (a song guitarist David Crosby played in his folk days) for 'The Scarecrow', his poetic folk jewel that used bare acoustic chords to accompany the vocal melody. Madrigal songs were a popular conceit in psychedelia, culled from folk.

Fifth Dimension, released in July, was a favourite, its jangling guitars and crafted harmonies ringing in Barrett's room. Guitarist Roger McGuinn adapted phrases from John Coltrane's 'India' into riffs. The album's pastoral acoustic moods and hard electric rhythm inspired Barrett's alternate currents of melody and dissonance.

The Yardbirds, with rotating guitarists Eric Clapton, Jeff Beck and Jimmy Page, did their fair bit to shake down city walls by changing the mode of their music. Jeff Beck unfolded complex solos laden with rhythmic fervour and unparalleled atmospherics. Beck's solo on 'Shapes of Things' (Number One on Radio London in March) signalled the psychedelia ahead. Keith Relf sang apocalyptic environmental lyrics as Beck stomped on his distortion pedal and kicked the figurative door open.

Guitar World editor Alan di Perna says, 'The Yardbirds were hugely influential. Just about every rock guitarist looked up to them. Early Floyd inserted wild improvised interludes into standard blues or R&B cover material like "Louie Louie". The principle was the same as Yardbirds rave-ups: a spontaneous instrumental set-piece at a different tempo than the main song. However, Yardbirds rave-up improvisations were more closely based on traditional blues pentatonic scales. Floyd's improvised sections were abstract, sometimes atonal *musique concrète*. Though the

“chicken scratch” finale to Jeff Beck’s outro solo in the Yardbirds’ “I’m a Man”, is precursor to Syd’s percussive and rhythmic guitar effects.’

Barrett’s music took a quantum leap forward when he ditched R&B for his unique modernism. It would be inaccurate to suggest that he left the blues behind; deeply rooted in his work, blues shone through like scattered jewels. Despite a debt to Bo Diddley (also an innovator in his milieu) and R&B, Barrett embarked upon a radical departure from the formulaic blues scales that continued to inform peers such as Eric Clapton. Of all musicians of his generation, Syd Barrett owes the least to black American music. He tuned into a deeper kind of blues, a personal expression of what was around him, with subversive twists that skewed pop something profound. Live, Barrett’s guitar work became evermore exploratory amid the bubbling hubbub of an effervescing underground.

In Barrett’s playing, the familiar blues scales that guitarists’ hands tend to gravitate towards are reduced to an essential thrust. Syd had learnt his chords and progressions to the point where he could knock out good R&B covers before taking a sharp turn into raga, free jazz and AMM-style experimentation.

All through 1966, Barrett worked out his formula before an adventurous audience willing to let the spectacle unfold. Coupling traditional English poetry with underground slang, Barrett’s odd meter underscored his unusual chord progressions.

Syd skated across single-note lines of triads of major chords. Playing in one key, he jettisoned all minor chords for majors, a hurly-burly swell of major triads moving by thirds and fifths. Barrett adopted alternate tunings for his electronic slide synthesis. An unusual open-E tuning struck at the heart of the darkest blues, as in Robert Johnson’s ‘Preachin’ Blues’. Barrett sat in his lair at Earlham Street and tuned fourth and fifth strings up a full step, and raised the third string a half step, to a major third, easing into ghostly cascades.

Barrett tuned his Harmony Sovereign acoustic down a half step, to fit his voice and match his prose-inspired lyrical meter. Shimmering overtones of twelve-string guitar imbued lush down strokes with extra resonance. A trick lifted from Cambridge folk circles was tuning the bottom four strings of a standard six-string acoustic guitar an octave higher, and sixth string two octaves up, to emulate a twelve-string. Both

Barrett and Gilmour used this tuning, called the ‘poor-man’s twelve-string’ by Gilmour.

In Barrett’s breakthrough variant on open-G tuning, his magic was unlocked. G-G-D-G-B-B saw unison strings mimic a twelve-string, as barré chords at sixth and third frets carried hypnotic harmonics. Syd’s tuning allowed one-finger chords, better for pulling off inspired slides, hammer-ons, pull-off vibratos, harmonics, muting notes, and picking strokes on.

In spring 1966, Peter Jenner, Hoppy, Ron Atkins and Alan Beckett set up the independent record production company DNA. An English version of ESP-Disk, DNA’s sessions at Sound Techniques Studio were produced by Joe Boyd and engineer John Wood. At the converted Chelsea dairy, Boyd and Wood recorded as Witchseason Productions from a control booth upstairs.

On 5 June, AMM hauled their gear into the tiny studio. Cornelius Cardew played piano and cello. Eddie Prévost, percussion. Keith Rowe on electric guitar and transistor radio. Lawrence Sheaff on cello, accordion, clarinet, and Lou Gare on sax or violin. AMM recorded a twenty-one-minute abstraction titled ‘After Rapidly Circling the Plaza’. When AMM returned to Sound Techniques on 27 June, Rowe recalled Barrett observing from the control room as they improvised the twenty-minute ‘Later During a Flaming Riviera Sunset’.

Many found AMM baffling. No solos, 4/4 rhythms, or vocals – no conventional ‘songs’ at all. Random radio effects were grafted on in layers, with ensemble playing focused ‘on feel rather than meter’. Given time and insight, the group proved to be a rewarding listen. ‘I produced AMM’s *Music for a Continuous Performance* with Hoppy for Elektra,’ explains Joe Boyd. ‘Peter Jenner and Hoppy were all involved with AMM as well, an awareness of the avant-garde in the air.’

AMM adopted a random radio interjection caught at the end of the album – ‘we cannot preserve the normal music’ – as their banner. Through Joe Boyd, *AMMMusic* was issued on Elektra, though it was deleted within months. Finances were the problem, as avant-garde music could not fund studio time, record pressing or distribution. Although groundbreaking, AMM were not commercial in any way. DNA’s next

album by Steve Lacy went unreleased. ‘We needed huge volume, an avant-garde pop group,’ insisted Jenner. In a serendipitous twist, he found just that.

On 13 June, Jenner sat working all Sunday morning, marking exam papers at the London School of Economics, and scribbling in the margins of his students’ papers. Now after several hours, he had an aching back and weary arms. Spring was moving in the air outside the dismal window of his office, he suddenly flung his pencil on the floor and bolted into the sunlight without even waiting to put on his coat. Something was calling him. Impatiently, Jenner waited for the tube to arrive at Leicester Square station. When it had, he bounded out the doors of the train and up leaden grey stairs, until he emerged among the milling throngs. He pursued his way across the square to the warren-like streets of Soho, marching up Wardour Street to the Marquee Club.

Inside, crude colour slides were projected on walls and various people romped around a giant jelly. Jenner walked into the Marquee’s small main room. He stood by the edge of a stage, where discordant guitar notes blared forth from amplifiers. Above him stood four lads with instruments. Under cover of the psychedelic lights a most unusual sound sprang forth. It might have been ‘Louie, Louie’ or ‘Roadrunner’ but for weird squalls of echo-laden feedback from the guitarist’s amplifier, blanketing the forty or fifty people in the audience, who shook themselves free from the ear-piercing sonics, only to be caught and held again. Handbills scattered by the edge of the stage announced the group as the Pink Floyd Sound.

The lecturer was fascinated, spellbound by exciting sounds. He sat on the edge of the stage and looked around the room as the music ended. A face appeared, the strange apparition winked at him, and declared himself to be the guitar player from the group. The face came out from under murky swell of psychedelic oil lights, like a frame around a picture. A pale, handsome face with thick silky hair and a white satin shirt. Something bright and small seemed to twinkle in his eyes, vanished, then twinkled once more like a tiny star.

Jenner recalled the group as ‘a strange band playing a mixture of R&B and electronic noises. I was intrigued. In between “Louie Louie” and “Roadrunner”, were these very weird breaks; so weird that I couldn’t

even work out which instrument the sound was coming from. All very bizarre and just what I was looking for. A far-out electronic freaky pop group, and across the bass amp was their name, "The Pink Floyd Sound".

'I couldn't work out whether it was coming from keyboards, or from guitar, and that was what interested me. The essential thing one found with Keith Rowe in AMM. I turned Syd onto things Keith did: rolling ball bearings on guitar strings. Keith Rowe was a terrific guitarist.'

At the Marquee's last Spontaneous Underground, the showcase band was an American group, the Misunderstood. Highly innovative, the Misunderstood soldered guitar jacks to automobile light bulbs and plugged them into extension outputs behind amplifiers, creating a lightshow of rippling feedback and harmonics. A jam titled 'The Trip (to Innerspace)' lasted thirty minutes, with Glenn Campbell's electrified lap-steel guitar ringing over the crowd – a direct influence on 'Interstellar Overdrive'. Three guitars feeding back on tremolo left the stage flashing with oscillating light patterns that stunned the audience, among them the Move and Pink Floyd.

Rick Brown of the Misunderstood says, 'When we played the Marquee, Syd and company were mightily impressed and [were] said to have copied parts of our show, leaving the stage with guitars against amps on autopilot feedback.'

Andrew King was working at British European Airways, and bored. Jenner found teaching at the LSE equally dull. They thought their best bet was to find a band to manage to pop stardom. Jenner could not have chosen a better time to 'discover' Pink Floyd, or take a leave of absence from the LSE, which would come close to closure that October in the wake of student protests.

Jenner approached Pink Floyd afterwards with a sincere (if ludicrous) gambit: 'You lads could be bigger than the Beatles!' The group rolled their eyes. Waters retorted, 'Yes, well, we'll see you when we get back from our holidays.'

Pink Floyd had debated the wisdom of reconvening after the summer holidays. Together for a more than a year and still *not pop stars*, lugging broken-down equipment to irregular gigs hardly seemed justified. Jenner blurted, 'You should stay together and sign to my label.' Waters, customarily sharp-tongued, responded to the effect that if Jenner and

King were so keen to sign them, they should come and see them after the holidays.

Keen to pursue his discoveries, Jenner got their number from Stollman. A month later, Jenner navigated the maze-like streets to Stanhope Gardens. Everyone was on holiday except for Waters, who was surprised that Jenner had bothered to follow up his interest. The bassist launched in with, 'What we need is a manager because otherwise we're going to break up. We don't have enough equipment, we need someone to help.'

Jenner returned to the house/office at Edbrooke Road that he and Andrew King shared with girlfriends and countless cats, all named Squeaky. He talked King into using his £200 savings to buy the Pink Floyd Sound a new Selmer PA system, a Fender bass for Roger, WEM amplifiers, guitar leads, cymbals and various other gear. Within weeks, the entire lot was stolen, along with the pitiful Morris van Rick Wright left at Hyde Park after a gig.

Frantic, Jenner and King rang Westminster alum Peter Asher of pop duo Peter & Gordon, and borrowed the group's WEM PA system. The new set-up made an immediate difference. Waters's bass throbbed at gut level, Wright's bell-like Farfisa tone tintinnabulations and Syd's Binson shards scattered like icicles off a tin roof, while Mason's mallets on double toms produced a potent sonic spectacle, strung halfway between pagan games in the woods and sacred evensong. Mason maintained a pulse, eschewing flashy drumming, hitting downbeats, and staying just behind the beat with steady eighth notes. When Mason and Waters locked into a loose metronomic downbeat, Syd responded by shifting chords on this downbeat. Pink Floyd were energised by fresh influences. Mason had seen Thelonious Monk and the Fugs in New York; Syd had his American underground epiphany; Wright and Waters had been on an acid-tinged sojourn in Patmos.

In September, Joe Boyd petitioned Jac Holzman, chief of Elektra, to sign the band. Elektra, America's hippest independent label, had Arthur Lee's Love, the Butterfield Blues Band, and – soon – the Doors on their roster. Boyd arranged an afternoon showcase at the Marquee. Holzman was unimpressed, grimacing at the extreme volume, and turned Pink

Floyd down, sparking Boyd's exit. With John Wood, Boyd set up his own independent Witchseason Productions to produce Pink Floyd.

Boyd saw parallels between the Floyd and the group whose debut he produced, Scottish acid-folkers the Incredible String Band. He had no trouble licensing them to Holzman for Elektra. Released in June, *The Incredible String Band* melded traditional folk with proto-psychedelic lyrics and unusual instruments layered atop acoustic guitars. The Incredible String Band's folk whimsy ran close to Barrett's brief, narrative songwriting. Boyd realised he'd struck a chord when the album became an underground favourite.

Among the Elektra promo discs Boyd passed to Barrett was one by the Butterfield Blues Band. With black Chicago electric-blues jazz dynamics and white hipster players, they released *East/West.* The nine-minute title track featured an improvisation that guitarist Mike Bloomfield came up with while high on LSD. Synthesised from Chicago blues, Indian ragas and John Coltrane, the guitarist exclaimed, 'I've found it, I've got it!' Bloomfield and rhythm guitarist Elvin Bishop traded licks across a jam initially known as 'The Raga'.

'You could improvise for a long, long, long time on modes or themes, and not just straight blues,' observed Bloomfield. 'My own personal vehicle for improvisation, coupled with things I'd heard in Indian music.'

Syd absorbed *East/West*'s textures and subtleties – interweaving the blues-raga's broad improvisational sweep into his own chromatic palette.

In October, the Butterfield Blues Band swept through England. 'Promoting *East/West*, I took Paul Butterfield and Mike Bloomfield to the Marquee to see the Move,' Boyd recalls. 'They were astonished, a very different aesthetic than American blues-based rock'n'roll.'

'It was ten years since "Rock Around the Clock",' says Keith Rowe, 'but [it] took ten years, especially in London, for something to happen, where you could cast off luggage. Having an open mind and shedding pre-rock players. Humorous pop songs had no relevance for us as those in the fast lane tried things out. At that point, alternative or "new wave" music covered categories from the avant-garde right through to experimental rock groups. Categorisation hadn't begun to form, a period where it was not yet clear how it would turn out. AMM could easily be confused with the Pink Floyd, though not for long. Concerts in London

had AMM with rock groups trying to make career moves and become famous. Geno Washington & the Ram Jam Band, Cream, Pink Floyd, Bluesbreakers and AMM all played the same gigs. AMM played parties in London where the Beatles relaxed on the sofa, an odd juxtaposition. By 1969-70, this wasn't possible anymore.'

'A naïve convergence,' recalled AMM drummer Eddie Prévost. 'People from all sensibilities found themselves temporarily working together. In our case, occasions when we played on the same bill as the Pink Floyd, in the Syd Barrett period. Also a sense [that] jazz and classical musicians could work together.'

'No one did work in the same vein as AMM,' says Rowe, 'but we had some correlation with Sonic Art Union of New York City, Musica Elettronica Viva in Italy, or Taj Mahal Travellers of Japan. We were the only ones doing pure, absolute improvisation. We knew we were not black or American. We had enormous respect for what black jazz musicians had done. Great jazz musicians who weren't appreciated never slavishly copied the generation before. They developed languages, ideas and forms – a powerful inspiration for us to develop a unique European music. Our solution was AMM.'

'Syd was the most creative person I've ever known,' Jenner declared. 'Extraordinary. In those few months at Earlham, he wrote nearly all his songs for the Floyd and solo albums. All casual, done off the top of the head. No tortured genius sweating through his pain. When people just write without inhibition, they write so much better.

'The strongest image I always have of Syd is him sitting in his flat in Earlham with guitar and book of songs, represented by paintings with different coloured circles. You'd go round to see Syd and you'd see him write a song. It just poured out. Syd did this wild, impossible drawing, and they turned it into the Pink Floyd,' Jenner added. 'His inventiveness was astounding. All those songs from that whole Pink Floyd phase were written in no more than six months. He just started and took it from there. His influences were very much the Stones, Beatles, Byrds and Love. The Stones were the prominent ones. Love's album too. I tried to tell him about this Arthur Lee song I could not remember the title of ("My Little Red Book"). I hummed the main riff. Syd picked up his guitar and

followed. The chord pattern he worked out he went on to use as main riff for “Interstellar Overdrive”.

‘Syd flowered writing songs,’ concluded Jenner. ‘He dug out his book of songs he already had, but went into a writing frenzy.’

Barrett wrote songs in coloured circles signifying chords and mood. Intersecting circles as in a Venn diagram made for subtle colorations in tone, phrasing and inflection. These devices related back, perhaps, to his experience with the orange, plum and matchbox. Even in his final years, coloured circles retained a symbolic significance for Syd. These related to music, with green circles painted atop his home stereo. To Barrett, music was circular. Music had neither beginning nor end, yet existed. That was magic enough.

Jenner and Barrett smoked hash and played AMM session tapes or ESP albums they’d got from Hoppy. An informal tutelage followed. The corpus of new, influential music included Sun Ra’s *Heliocentric Worlds of Sun Ra*, and *Bells* by Albert Ayler.

The Sun Ra Arkestra were heavy on dramatic solos alternating with spaced ambient sections. Horns pierced sharply through clouds of keyboard, creating abstract sound images. ‘Interstellar Low Ways’, was a long modal improvisation with a meandering flute solo, and jarring piano by Ra in the middle.

Though Waters joked that Syd sourced the descending riff from ‘Interstellar Overdrive’ from the theme of television series *Steptoe and Son*, Barrett was applying lessons learned from jazz guiarists Wes Montgomery and Jim Hall. Barrett’s electric odyssey sprang from scalar descending chromatic riffs dissolved and coalesced in indiscrete pitches. Syd freely adapted the ‘Charlie Parker Scale’ or ‘Bebop Chromatic’ scale, adding chromatic notes everywhere possible over Wright’s Mixolydian scales. A descending chromatic scale over a dominant chord, unlike bebop, Syd put passing notes on off beats and scale notes on Mason’s steady down beats. Targeting chord tones, Syd emphasised descending chromatic lines, echoing falling progressions in nursery rhymes, and giving his works their telltale darkness.

Syd often accentuated or delayed a particular note with echo rather than connecting notes, dropping in non-scale tones wherever subtle alterations demanded. Syd learned well from listening to Charlie Parker

and Wes Montgomery. Hitting the top note in an *arpeggio*, Syd could reverse or advance at will for dramatic effect. Underground regular Mick Farren noted 'Interstellar Overdrive' was 'a repeating four chord theme, little more than "Green Onions" in reverse and descending'.

The title was a nod to overdriven valve amplifiers, though more directly from science-fiction tale *The Ruum* by Arthur Porges: 'The cruiser Ilkor had just gone into her interstellar overdrive beyond the orbit of Pluto.' Wynne-Willson remembers 'incredible lyrics and songs flowing from Syd in a few months. Concentrated but not an outpouring, "Astronomy Dominé" was case in point. I can remember him writing "Astronomy Dominé", which wasn't a one evening scene, he worked on it quite hard.'

In 'Astronomy Dominé', we find a comprehensive synthesis of Syd's varied inspirations. An astral chant from his space-age book, a feast of images mounted on sound, 'Astronomy Dominé' is a study of signs. The title, culled from a waterlogged French paperback of *Basic Writings* by philosopher Bertrand Russell that Jean-Simone Kaminsky had left behind (not a term in Latin, as is often supposed), reflected acid consciousness.

'Le monde de l'astronomie domine…'

'The world of *astronomy dominates* my imagination and I am very conscious of the minuteness of our planet in comparison with the systems of galaxies.' 'Astronomy Dominé' also referenced the 1820 poem *Prometheus Unbound,* by Romantic poet Percy Bysshe Shelley. Flipping open his 1913 *Cambridge Book of Poetry for Children*, edited by Kenneth Grahame, Syd Barrett again drew from the poem for 'See Emily Play'.

Barrett pointedly references *Operation Saturn,* in which Dan Dare and Digby find Saturn orbited by moons populated by strange creatures ruled from Titan. The duo escape to the outermost moon, Phoebe, which seems to be a globe of water. Plummeting through the liquid atmosphere, Dan and Digby find Phoebe populated by primitive creatures. Barrett's synaesthetic correlation of sound and colour makes for an amorphous tang, like the vivid green algae at the water's edge near boat yards at Silver Street Bridge. The dreaded Mekon, Dan Dare's dire foe, had lime-green skin.

If some lines seem to be a meditation on hypnotic states induced by the Dream Machine, they also call to mind Roy Lichtenstein's 1962 pop art painting of an American fighter plane exploding (*Blam!*).

Pairing imagery of limitless expanses of outer space with Coleridge's fathomless caverns of Xanadu made 'Jupiter and Saturn, Oberon, Miranda and Titania' seem so very far from home. Fittingly, given Barrett's fondness for English literature, the moons of Uranus are named from William Shakespeare's plays and Alexander Pope's poetry; Oberon and Titania being the king and queen fairies in *A Midsummer Night's Dream.* Barrett explored fathomless space seeking the earthbound and familiar, and hung English literature on the cosmos.

Syd compounds the assonance and internal rhyming found in Shelley's poem into a visual shorthand that conveys plunging into watery chasms of sound. In 'Astronomy Dominé' enchantment *is* sound. As surely as Sant Mat's audible sound current radiates from the dawn of the universe, so sound is the unifying factor in 'Astronomy Dominé'.

In awe of the infinite, 'Astronomy Dominé' solidified from Pink Floyd's freeform improvisations at the Marquee. The piece began with an unconventional intro, verse and chorus distantly based on the Chantays' 'Pipeline', and the theme from *Quatermass* – Holst's 'Mars, the Bringer of War' in *The Planets* suite.

'A great piece to play, a great energy song,' asserted Mason. 'Scary, almost eternal.' Driving in 6/8 time, Mason opened with ferocious drum rolls, pounding offbeat fills and snare cracks. 'Everyone remembers Syd for his song writing,' Mason wrote in *Inside Out.* 'He probably deserves equal credit for his radical concept of improvised rock music.' His reverb plucking and E-string *staccato* slides drove the band on.

Other bands recorded long twelve-bar jams, like 'Goin' Home' by the Rolling Stones, which at nine minutes hints at how music was opening out, though these still took their structure from blues. The Mothers of Invention's *musique-concrète*-inspired 'The Return of the Son of Monster Magnet' took up an entire side on *Freak Out*. 'Two Trains Running' by Blues Project ran to eleven minutes, 'Up in Her Room' by the Seeds seemed endless, and Bob Dylan's 'Sad Eyed Lady of the Lowlands' was a fourteen-minute folk dirge.

‘The Pink Floyd were the only psychedelic band,’ insisted Jenner. ‘Various bands came along to copy, but the Floyd didn’t play with chords. At their finest, extraordinary free improvisation in the purest psychedelic sense. We thought we were doing what was happening on the West Coast, which we’d never heard. It was totally different. Attempting to imitate when you don’t know what you’re imitating leads to genuine creativity. That’s what happened with the Floyd.’

Asked about Pink Floyd’s headlong plunge into improvisation, Jenner joked, ‘My guess is this was not even intentional, they are a lazy bunch and could not be bothered to practice. They probably had to improvise to get away with it.’

‘Our music is light and sound. We don’t want any particular image,’ Waters declared. ‘Two years ago, we were a blues group. Then we suddenly stopped playing ordinary music and began improvising around single chords. This gave us a lot more musical freedom.’

John Esam, undaunted, continued to seed intellectual hotspots with LSD. He turned up in Oxford in August, where he cruised to the room of Howard Marks, later the most famous hashish importer Britain has ever known. Wearing trademark shades and short-cropped jet-black hair, Esam banged on Howard’s door at Balliol. ‘Hi, we’ve been told you were a groove,’ said Esam, by way of introduction. Esam brandished a bag of sugar cubes. ‘Three quid each, I’m making it at home in the kitchen.’

The ever-grinding wheels of Britain’s nanny state saw LSD declared illegal in September. Acid was placed in the same Class A category as heroin. The following month, Esam came up for trial. Despite Albert Hoffman taking the witness stand for the prosecution, Nobel Prize-winning professor Ernst Chain successfully argued that LSD did not conform to existing poison rules. Hoffman agreed that the ergot used to make LSD was different. Esam and Page were acquitted.

Cromwell Road’s drug trade continued unabated, a daily and nightly stream of people wanting to turn on. ‘We didn’t care about LSD being made illegal,’ declares Nigel Lesmoir-Gordon. ‘I wasn’t on any quest to have drugs legalised. We lived outside the law anyway, it was just another thing authorities were doing.’

‘Because *we* were illegal police were always coming round,’ adds Jenny Lesmoir-Gordon. ‘People wanted to put acid in the water supply. One of the Ormsby-Gore’s put LSD in the tea of the woman next to her at the hairdressers!’

‘There were great trips I took at Cromwell, in the right set and setting, without hostile people,’ continues Nigel. ‘Trips were personal anyway.’ Timothy Leary advised users to observe ‘set and setting’ – one’s mental state (‘set’) and physical surroundings and company (‘setting’) being key to a good LSD trip. ‘I sat and stared into honey pots and watched light bend and refract, watching the universe being reborn, stirring it slightly,’ recalls Nigel. ‘I discussed alchemy with Stash de Rola. We got off on the quest for the Holy Grail, Arthurian legend, alchemy, and elixir of life.’

Jenny Spires first visited Cromwell Road that summer, popping around the corner from the Lucie Clayton Modelling School in South Kensington. She recalled the flat as a mixed bag of people living on several storeys of a grand old Victorian terrace house.

For Spires, the house was a great place to hang out and meet with other Cambridge folk and London friends like Duggie Fields. Fields, studying at the Chelsea College of Arts, would be painting away in his room when Pink Floyd rehearsed in the flat. He often went downstairs and put on Smokey Robinson as loudly as possible, trying to teach them rhythm. Roger Waters lived there for a stretch, before moving to Peter Jenner’s new digs.

‘Of Pink Floyd, Syd was the only one who became a friend,’ Fields explains. ‘Syd was charming, entertaining, and a great wit. On a personal level, I got on with Syd in a way I never got on with Roger. Roger I always found difficult, arrogant and opinionated. Rick was a nice guy. I don’t remember him being anything more than that. Nick didn’t register. We never formed a relationship.’

On 23 September, a strangely dressed black man arrived at Heathrow Airport from New York. Manager Chas Chandler of the Animals carried his guitar to avoid work-permit questions by customs officials. Hours off the plane, he jammed with Zoot Money and his Big Roll Band, the culture shock was acute. At a Cream gig at Regent Street Poly on 1 October, after Hendrix jammed, a shaken Eric Clapton, called ‘God’ by

his fans, retreated to the wings. ‘He’s that good?’ stammered Clapton to Chandler, lighting a cigarette with shaking hands.

Mason and Waters stood at the front and were blown away by Hendrix and Cream blasting through ‘Killing Floor’. The elite of London’s rock guitarists – Townshend, Page, Beck and Clapton – were soon sat front and centre at Jimi Hendrix Experience performances, soaking up his electric gypsy blues. Clapton and Barrett emulated Hendrix’s flamboyant dress sense and electrified afro. Barrett simply noted, ‘Hendrix was a perfect guitarist.’

Hendrix played an inimitable blues, culled from gigs in touring bands backing Little Richard and the Isley Brothers. Hendrix brought over Buddy Guy-style distortion and Lightnin’ Hopkins showboating, playing guitar with his teeth, behind his head, doing the splits. Dylan, the Stones and the Beatles influenced Hendrix as much as R&B had. While influencing British guitarists, Hendrix was influenced in turn. His radical sound opened up British rock’s horizons.

For Barrett, Hendrix’s unique blues was a launch pad into exploding tonality, not a twelve-bar cemetery. Barrett’s own electric blues, steeped in children’s literature, mysticism and acid improvisation, soon inspired Hendrix in return. Barrett was pushing the sonic envelope months before Hendrix arrived by melding the British avant-garde into rock.

Cream energised Pink Floyd’s rhythm section. The very next day, Mason bought a seven-piece Premier kit like Ginger Baker’s. Bass drum, snare, two tom-toms and floor tom, with either a second floor tom, or second bass drum. Waters recalled, ‘Cream were such a turn-on. An all-enveloping, loud, powerful bluesy experience.’

Barrett had already seen Cream at the Sixth National Jazz and Blues Festival, which took place in Windsor that July. He and Po Powell stood in pouring rain for Cream’s second ever gig. Clapton stood resplendent in a satin coat from Granny’s as the trio ripped through their set under the marquee tent. They also saw the Small Faces, the Who and the Move.

In December, Cream released the single ‘I Feel Free’, a song at the boundary between mod and psychedelia, identified by author Jon Savage as ‘the mod/psych cusp’.

‘“I Feel Free” is a weird song,’ recalls lyricist Pete Brown. ‘I didn’t know what I was doing yet. It was psychedelic, I suppose. My lyrics

were filled with film imagery. “I Feel Free” was a whole piece, and solid arrangement. Bruce set out to make a hard rhythm track and on top, a soft melody. That contrast makes things work. “I Feel Free” has a real design.’ This hard/soft dynamic typified the transition to psychedelia, as cannabis blunted rough blues, and acid made one dream.

The night Mason and Waters saw Cream with Hendrix, Syd was across town at the Royal Albert Hall, catching the Yardbirds on a magnificent triple bill with the Rolling Stones and Ike & Tina Turner. He witnessed Jeff Beck and Jimmy Page’s bravura guitar duels. Page played an off-white 1959 Telecaster, a gift from Jeff Beck, decorated with four silver circles. Barrett was electrified when the house lights glinted off Page’s guitar, and set about modifying his own Esquire. Already having painted his guitar several times, he glued silver Mylar plastic sheeting and ten silver discs onto the body.

Journalist Alan di Perna points out, ‘Mirrors are often used ritually by shamans or priests – in Tibetan Buddhism, for instance – sometimes pointed toward the crowd to mesmerize or induce a meditative state.’ On a disc mounted on the scratch plate, Barrett painted a yellow circle. The mystical symbol for the element of air and the direction East.

College studies went by the wayside, with Wright dropping out, as Waters baited witless teachers with charged political arguments. Music became Barrett’s creative focus. Quitting education was a decision he would later regret. ‘Maybe if I’d stayed at college, I would have become a teacher,’ mused Syd. ‘Leaving school and suddenly being without that structure around you and nothing to relate to, maybe that’s a part of it, too.’

Having reached a critical juncture that involved considerable soul-searching, Barrett cast his lot with Pink Floyd.

6. THE DOLL'S HOUSE

'What is an eternity of damnation compared to an infinity of pleasure in a single second?'

Paris Spleen
Charles Baudelaire, 1869

Hoppy showed up at Holland Park Comprehensive, a bastion of socialist education for eleven- to eighteen-year-olds. He announced the establishment of the London Free School as a freeform cultural venue, open to all.

Fifteen-year-old schoolgirl Emily Young skylarked across Holland Park and down Portobello Road to the Free School with her best friend Anjelica Huston. Anjelica was the daughter of filmmaker John Huston, while the Honourable Emily Tacita Young was the daughter of Wayland Hilton Young, author of *Eros Denied: Sex in Western Society*, Baron of Kennet in the House of Lords.

Little was glamorous about the London Free School, or indeed Notting Hill, a ghetto with rough-and-tumble bohemians living amid West Indians and students in houses that were usually in a state of shabby disrepair. At the Free School, they made fires and cooked vegetable soups scavenged from Portobello Market.

For Emily and Anjelica, the area was not Notting Hill or the Grove, simply 'Portobello', a magical confluence of literal street theatre. The two girls often roamed the local streets at 2:00am. Young says, 'No fear, we were never in danger. The Grove was quiet, a strange, rather haunted atmosphere late at night. Buildings were being demolished after [notorious slumlord] Peter Rachman for the A40 flyover.'

Despite the race riots almost a decade earlier, there was little overt animosity between West Indians and bohemians. 'Beats and hippies would buy drugs from West Indians,' recalls Emily. 'Good friendships in

my memory.' Young was, by her own description, extremely surly and shy. She and Anjelica dressed in all-black ragtag Victorian gowns and slips, like prototype Goths, and planned their evenings. 'Anjelica was not as cynical as I,' she explains. 'My cynicism was absolutely due to reading Romantic poets, Beats and existentialism, also William Blake.' A famous *graffito* located on their way to the Free School was Blake's: 'The tigers of wrath are wiser than the horses of instruction.'

One of Emily's boyfriends, Canterbury poet and musician Dave Tomlin, conducted a 'Fantasy Workshop' at the Free School; cosmic 'electric acid-raga' sessions with drummer Glenn Sweeney and bassist Roger Bunn. As Giant Sun Trolley, they formed part of the supporting cast at underground events.

Itinerant schoolgirls brought unwelcome attention to the Free School. Pete Brown says, '"See Emily Play" was based on this schoolgirl. This English cult of the schoolgirl in fetish uniform has always been around – the more dubious side of English culture, allied with British repression and fetishes. Emily was someone I went out and about with. I was friends with her because Anjelica Huston was at the same school, and hung out with Emily as well. I met them walking down Portobello Road. I did poetry gigs in schools. I was young, in my twenties. These girls were seventeen or eighteen. I went out with them. English schoolgirls in the sixties were forward-looking, discovering their own sexuality. I guess it was a good time, which might sound sexist. As the sixties progressed, women got pushed into too much. The burden on them was quite a lot. They didn't have as much freedom as people think they did.'

In September, the London Free School-organised Notting Hill Pageant filled streets with London Irish Girl Pipers, and West Indian and Afro-Cuban bands on floats parading down Portobello Road. Hoppy's *The Grove* newsletter announced that 'September 1966 will be a landmark in Notting Hill. For the first time this century – Notting Hill is to have its own Fair.' Afterwards, a jazz and poetry evening at All Saints Vicarage Hall in Powis Gardens was packed to the rafters.

The London Free School ran ramshackle, as organisers were sidetracked by mounting the carnival. Come autumn, they had to raise funds or the enterprise would founder. In league with the vicar at All Saints, they launched fund-raising socials that consolidated their position

among the underground. ‘With one or two others, I was running the London Free School,’ Hoppy recounts. ‘The school didn’t work out. Debts had to be paid off. We put on a benefit at All Saints Hall, someone did the lightshow, and the Pink Floyd played. Debts were paid off, or nearly so.’

Emily Young whirled about the polished wooden floor wearing a gown that touched the ground, a figure of graceful calm in a dark storm of sound and light. Syd noted the whirling schoolgirl whose passion for seedy bohemia seemed suspect. Young says, ‘All Saints Hall was pretty dark. Lights were a coloured oil and water slide show on the screen at the back, and not much else.’

Jenner and King placed an advert in *Melody Maker* that directed Timothy Leary’s phrase, ‘Turn On, Tune In, Drop Out,’ at the underground. (Waters suggested ‘Turn Up, Shell Out, Get Lost’ as a fitting substitute.) Mason said the gigs were important: ‘The first time we were booked in under our own name, and drew a crowd.’

Roger Waters observed that the turnout steadily increased from ‘about twenty people when we first played, the second week a hundred, then four hundred, and after that you couldn’t get in’.

Rick Wright recalled the All Saints Hall gigs as being ‘purely experimental, learning and finding what we were trying to do. Each night was a complete buzz because we did totally new things and none knew how the others would react – the formation of Pink Floyd.’

With few in the audience the first night, the lingering London Free School vibe was informal and shambolic. Pete Brown says, ‘We all ended jamming. Mick Farren, Alexis Korner, Nick Mason, Arthur Brown and me – all singing Little Richard’s “Lucille”. It wasn’t music. Nonsense, but funny.’ Syd launched into Hamlet’s famed ‘to be or not to be’ soliloquy, to an audience of twenty or thirty, mostly friends, who crowded close.

Emily Young recalls there being ‘no particular glorious sense of occasion. All Saints was a church hall with municipal tea urns – a dingy old place, not glamorous. A low buzz of the moment, and food for the hungry, somewhere to hang out, talk and dance. Exciting but not amazing, All Saints was definitely the cool scene in a street way. I was

glad to be there. A seam of possibilities in the midst of the grey city opened.'

Peter Mercier, student at Ealing Art College, photographed Pink Floyd. 'There were thirty people at the gig. All Saints Church Hall was furnished sparsely. A machine with a revolving wheel of coloured oils projected strangely dripping and pulsating images, which could have been one's brain disintegrating, but were harmless unless one had taken refreshments beforehand. Some people danced with imaginary friends while others stared at the middle distance and contemplated the meaning of music. The music, well, it was very strange.'

Openers Soft Machine were another band integral to the underground. From a scene in Canterbury similar to that found in Cambridge, like Pink Floyd, Soft Machine sprang from Beat sensibilities, the avant-garde, and a love of modern jazz, pop and soul. Idiosyncratic bassist and songwriter Kevin Ayers and guitarist Daevid Allen kept them from falling into the kind of endless jazz-fusion solos that ultimately sank the group. Ayers and Allen had been skylarking in Deià, Mallorca on acid, hanging out with minimalist composer Terry Riley and William Burroughs in Paris.

At Easter, Allen had a powerful dream, much like Syd's revelation. In Deià, he saw his life mapped out. 'Offering myself to powers that combine, energise and transform all that lives through music became my only reason to exist, my life purpose.' Days later, an eccentric American millionaire offered to fund a band led by Allen. In August, Allen and Ayers formed Soft Machine with Larry Nolan, Robert Wyatt and Mike Ratledge. On 30 September, they opened for Pink Floyd at All Saints Hall.

Soft Machine and the Floyd, amiable professional rivals, were mutual admirers. Soft Machine declared to *Melody Maker,* 'We dig the Pink Floyd very much because they have got their own scene. They haven't copied anybody else. They've gone out, found themselves and taken a big chance.'

From common starting points amid the underground, drummers Mason and Robert Wyatt became lifelong friends. Barrett and Kevin Ayers, similar in temperament, formed a certain rapport. 'When I met Syd,' said Ayers, 'I found an open door into the universe. We met on a wave of sympathetic feeling, but I never felt I knew the guy –

untouchable, inaccessible.' Ayers and Barrett epitomised the laidback troubadour of the sixties; languid delivery, guitars by the river in summer. They did nothing to grab your attention. Dubbed 'whimsical', Ayers and Barrett's songs shared keen elliptical observations.

On 14 October, seventeen-year-old Nick Jones of *Melody Maker* wrote the Floyd's first music-press review: 'Last Friday, the Pink Floyd, a new London group, embarked upon their first "happening", a pop dance incorporating psychedelic effects and mixed media. Slides were excellent, colourful, frightening, grotesque, and beautiful. The group's trip into outer space sounds promised very interesting things to come. Unfortunately it all fell flat in the cold reality of All Saints Hall. The Floyd need to write more of their own material.

'"Psychedelic" versions of "Louie Louie" won't come off. If they can incorporate electronic prowess with some melodic and lyrical songs, getting away from dated R&B things, they could well score in the near future.'

Though Jones criticised the group for playing covers, save for three Bo Diddley songs, the set was entirely comprised of original material. Syd's typed set-list shows several of his own compositions, one by Waters and two group improvisations. The bulk of their first album was already in place, an indication of their rapid progress.

The group set up on the polished stage in the old vicarage. Peter Jenner, still the lecturer and not yet an unwitting impresario, hunched over the raw set-up of lights weighed down at the lip of the stage. With a hope and prayer that the feeble rig wouldn't erupt in flames, they gingerly plugged into the mains. Dimmed lights above flickered as coloured light lit the screen, reflecting into the audience while the velvet and brass of All Saints Hall glittered like beacons.

Barrett, adapting Dylan's dodge and feint combination, leant into the microphone and wailed, 'I'm *high*! Don't try to spoil the fun,' like an obstreperous child to a cluck-clucking old aunt. Recognition rippled through the audience, which swelled to a hundred. Barrett sang their tune. Sketching circles of infinity with his *glissandi*, Syd brought out his modified silver Esquire for the first time – a readymade psychedelic revelation. As the crude light show hit the discs and shone light back at the audience, Syd used the guitar as a visual prop to 'shower silver on the

people' like a magic sceptre. The light show hit the silver discs and a star was born.

For the first set, Pink Floyd opened with unknown instrumental 'Pink', followed by 'Let's Roll Another' from Syd's days with Those Without. Mainstays from Highgate followed – Bo Diddley's 'Give Me a Break (Man)' and 'Piggy Back Surfers'. Sandwiched between Bo Diddley numbers, 'Stoned Alone' betrayed its origins, showing Barrett in candid mode.

'The Gnome', a playful song drawn from *The Little Grey Men* and Tolkien, followed Bo Diddley's 'I Can Tell'. The group ended the first set with 'Interstellar Overdrive' – the instrumental Waters called 'an abstract piece' that remained the band's live centrepiece for eighteen months.

'I saw the Pink Floyd at All Saints Hall. A memorable performance for me, the most potent,' recounts Duggie Fields. 'They had great theatrical showmanship. Musically, what Pink Floyd was doing was interesting, but they had no rhythm. Inventive and experimental, but they couldn't dance. They weren't much to look at except for Syd. People did lightshows in Cromwell Road and at Earlham. I was used to lightshows being done in a home and hanging about watching them.

'I liked watching Pink Floyd with no audience, because I could hear them clearly. There couldn't have been more than fifty people. One guy dancing on his own, amazing. No one ever danced to Pink Floyd. I'd never seen anyone dance like that, very stylishly dressed. Potent music, what they were doing, definitely. The Pink Floyd did something that extended away from basic R&B. The Pink Floyd you didn't look at, you looked at effects around them, whereas with everyone else you looked at the group. The group wanted you to look at them. The Pink Floyd wanted you to be distracted from looking at them. The lightshows were entertaining, but a big difference between people who have charisma onstage and use it and those who deny any charisma. Pop performers play with that. The Pink Floyd wouldn't.'

The second set began with Syd's ode to love gone wrong, 'Lucy Leave'. Roger Waters came up with 'Stethoscope', the first of his songs resembling lists. Buttressed by a long instrumental mid-section, 'Stethoscope' surfaced on their debut album.

Two songs that would remain unrecorded, ‘Flapdoodle Dealing’, and ‘Snowing’ (the latter possibly being a germinal version of ‘Flaming’), were followed by Barrett’s haunted ode to childhood bedtime stories, ‘Matilda Mother’ (with lyrics taken from Belloc’s *Cautionary Tales*). This was followed by group freak-out ‘Pow R. Toc H.’. The atmospheric closer: ‘Astronomy Dominé’.

Encouraged by seeing the band play before an audience in tune with their experimental spirit, Jenner found he was in agreement with the *Melody Maker* review and urged the group to drop the R&B covers in favour of Syd’s brilliant originals and group jams. This would also serve to solidify a group identity.

Critical to Pink Floyd’s stage show in particular, and the underground scene in general, was that as psychedelics spread, lightshows mushroomed. ‘Two guys turned up from America and did the oil slide show,’ explained Jenner. ‘They said they were from San Francisco and did lights. We said, “Great, come and do lights.”’ Joel and Toni Brown had been cohorts of Doctor Timothy Leary at the experimental acid commune Millbrook, New York. The Millbrook contingent put on the first public psychedelic lightshow when they lit Charles Mingus at the Village Vanguard in April 1965. They came to London bearing rudimentary oil and water slides, leaving almost as soon as they arrived.

At All Saints Hall, local artist John Latham projected his film *Speak* as Pink Floyd played. Latham said, ‘The film had a powerful flicker effect, equivalent to strobe lighting. Film and music ran in parallel – no planned synchronisation.’

‘The lightshow was due to various influences, like someone coming over from the States, heard Pink Floyd and liked it, and had got a projector and knew how to make a water slide and did so,’ Nick Mason remarked to *Melody Maker*. ‘At the beginning, there was the music with a few people flashing lights over it. Lights were insignificant because no one had got into powerful bulbs. When the idea got taken along farther, it fluctuated wildly between a smaller place with higher intensity of light and good balance between light and sound, otherwise it would be murky, inky, darkness.’

Freed from static stage lights, this most perishable sixties art form stunned with chimerical colours and expressionistic shadows. LSD

catalysed an impulse to have light and sound produced in tandem. Lacking recourse to Brown's oil slides, Jenner, wife Sumi, and King built the first integrated lightshow for Pink Floyd. From scavenged electrical parts, they mounted closed beam spotlights on wooden boards, operated via switches. 'If you put them a long way away they had no impact,' Jenner explained. 'We put them right in front with hugely dramatic shadows behind, which I'm sure everyone thought was brilliant. A complete fuck-up and mistake, as all the best things are.' Mason told music critic Mark Paytress, 'It wasn't a conscious decision to play trip music. Simply us reacting to visual stimulus ill-suited to choruses and middle-eights.'

Sixteen-year-old technical whiz Joe Gannon was Pink Floyd's first lighting engineer. The young American had first encountered the band at Hornsey, where he'd been part of the Light/Sound Workshop. Gannon was recruited after the final Hornsey gig on 18 November.

'I went to an early concert under new management in a West London church,' says Peter Kuttner. 'By this time, the Floyd had been taken in hand by a miracle-worker and were launched on their stellar career. They engaged Peter Dockley to create a performance segment at concerts and would collect him from Mike's house in a car.' Dockley recalls, 'I offered to drive Pink Floyd and equipment over to Powis Square, as they were without sufficient transport. This was the first time I heard them play. Ink projections covered the wall behind the stage. The effect was overpowering, absolutely wonderful.'

'We take all the lighting equipment and get it set up before the show starts,' Waters explained. 'Then our lighting manager takes over while we're playing and it's up to him to choose light sequences that strike him as being harmonious with sounds being produced by us. Before we start, the whole room is blacked out and then the lights go into operation. We link sounds together not usually linked, and link lights not usually linked.'

Gannon had boundless energy and set straight to work operating the barebones rig. Basing his show on Brown's work, Gannon constructed a rudimentary oil slide show using overhead projectors, glass bowls and coloured dye.

‘The first to do lightshows was Joe Gannon, a bright teenager,’ confirms Hoppy. ‘Gannon had already made a film called *Getting it Straight in Notting Hill*. People travelling brought artefacts with them. Also Jack Bracelin, from the nudist colony in Watford, and Mark Boyle, lecturer at Reading University.’ Hoppy wrote in *IT*: ‘Gannon quickly caught on and produced what is the basis of their light now. Two projectors from the back of the hall illuminate the stage with multicoloured liquid moving slides. Occasionally coloured lights flash onstage, or a movie is shown.’

‘I design the slides, basing them on my idea of the music,’ Gannon told Hoppy. ‘The lights work rhythmically. I wave my hand over micro-switches and different colours flash. We have only been using lights for one month. Before, we were concentrating on starting with the right equipment. Lighting is so much a part of the group that it had to be good before it could blend properly with the music.’

Mark Boyle’s lightshows were colourful and artistic. A canny self-promoter, Boyle made extraordinary claims to have invented lightshows. His began by accident, with a burnt slide projected onto a wall at the Destruction in Art Symposium in September. Boyle took lightshows out of art schools and into the open, whether the ICA or a club. He gave his lightshow a name, ‘Son et Lumière for Bodily Functions and Fluids’, which he and his partner Joan Hills took along to poetry readings and art shows.

They outraged audiences by having a couple make love behind a white screen onstage, wired to ECG and EEG monitors, heartbeats and brain patterns projected above. Billed as the Sensual Laboratory (a brand name for artists working with light), Boyle and Hills took source materials to extremes: coughing phlegm, urinating into bowls, and placing fluids under microscopic slides – all of it blown up and projected onto a large screen. The duo attached contact mikes to throats and amplified the sound around All Saints Hall.

‘Ours is a light/sound show,’ asserted Waters. ‘As for our music, it is pop but very free and full of improvisation. Some numbers run half an hour. We started on this lighting idea a couple of years ago. Visual images are just as good a thing to give an audience as sounds. Visual images can be really stimulating when you’re onstage playing. There is

no preconceived arrangement. An idea dreamed up using images and sounds. Otherwise it's all improvisation.'

Nick Mason remarked, 'We were disorganised until our managers materialised and we started looking for a guy to do the lights full time. The lighting man has to be one of the group. In our early stages, we didn't play our electronic "interstellar" music and slides were still rather amateurish. This has developed now and our "take off" into mainly improvised electronic scenes are much longer. The slides have developed out of all proportion.'

'My first links with the Pink Floyd were at All Saints Hall, the first time I saw them playing,' recalls Peter Wynne-Willson. 'Joe Gannon was doing the lightshow.'

Soon, Gannon departed for California, where six months later he was running lightshows at the Avalon Ballroom in San Francisco. Gannon was succeeded by Wynne-Willson and Russell Page, Syd's Cambridge mate. Wynne-Willson hung around the local repertory theatre doing lighting, stage carpentry and electrical work. 'In London, I worked for the New Theatre, where the musical *Oliver* was playing. When *Oliver* ended, they chucked an awful lot of equipment I took home and recycled.'

From Earlham Street's flat roof, Syd and Lindsay spotted Wynne-Willson lugging equipment up four flights of stairs, hammering, and soldering a lighting rig for the group late at night. The band could hardly afford a 'lighting designer', so Peter also doubled as the van's driver.

Pip Carter from Cambridge was taken on as road manager, a post that involved lugging gear from Jenner and King's flat to gigs. John Marsh, a young mod who hung around All Saints Hall, was taken on as a lighting assistant. The management duo set up house in Paddington's Pennard Mansions, where Roger Waters, June Child and the Marshes lived. Within weeks, ten people were in the firm now known as Blackhill's payroll. Wynne-Willson was put on contract at £20 a week and five percent of the gross.

'Lightshows were desperately unsophisticated, but for the time, effective,' said Marsh. 'Strange stories got around: electronic links between the lights and the group, absolute nonsense. The whole thing was primitive and relied on liquid slide projection, Kodak carousels with

pre-programmed cassette changes, and also two effects built by Peter: one called the "Daleks", the other the "Flashes". Two things the Floyd had which no other band had. This put them, in lightshow terms, streets ahead. This was still manually operated, switch-oriented stuff.'

Though Gannon and Wynne-Willson disdained using actual strobe lighting, their stroboscopic lightshow – of rapidly alternating patterns, flickering pure white light and prisms that gave illusion of vivid colours – had unforeseen consequences. Wynne-Willson explained, 'The initial illusion was of white light which produced rainbow trails behind any movement, because your eyes couldn't resolve the coloured light fast enough. In the brain, however, all sorts of colours and form would appear.' When they took the lightshow out on the road with the band, one newspaper noted: 'After watching Pink Floyd's new lighting invention one man collapsed in a frenzied fit.'

For London's burgeoning underground, after All Saints Hall, the Pink Floyd were their band. Jenny Fabian says, 'I never saw them at All Saints Hall, although I saw they were on, because I lived in Powis Square around the corner. I don't know why I didn't go, not because I didn't want to. Their name was in my consciousness.'

One such fan, Firdsi, sparkled onto the scene. 'I wore satin and paisley velvets and ostrich feathers and spent my time studying hallucinatory effects of various and sundry plants and chemicals,' she says. 'I attended the Technicolor Dream in London, hung out at Indica Bookstore, UFO, and Middle Earth and religiously read *International Times.'*

'They instantly went off like a rocket,' says Jenner. 'They started in September and by Christmas we had centre-page spreads in *Melody Maker*. We none of us knew what hit us. A tiny church hall, it couldn't have held more than three hundred; heaving, you couldn't move. Originally, all word of mouth, all our mates, and the community. Suddenly it hit a responsive chord. It wasn't too psychedelic, smoking dope, but not much acid. We'd read about it, but there wasn't much around. The only people who smoked, in any considerable sense, were Syd and I. Roger Waters was convinced I was a drug dealer and Andrew and I were dealing. I wish I had been.'

Hoppy was energised when a unique woman dropped into his life in October. Fancy dress and flowers were second nature to Suzy Creamcheese (Susan Ziegler). In Los Angeles, she formed part of the auxiliary cadre surrounding Frank Zappa's Mothers of Invention at the Ziegler Ballrooms her father owned. The attraction was immediate. With vivacious Suzy at his side, Hoppy's plans went into overdrive.

Inspired by the *Village Voice*, Hoppy and Miles, along with Americans Jack Henry Moore and Jim Haynes of Edinburgh's Traverse Theatre and Paperback Bookstore, began a layout for what Miles termed 'a mass communication paper'. *International Times* featured articles, artwork and editorials emanating from a decidedly underground perspective – 'an auto-destructive collective poem'.

On 15 October, they launched the *International Times* (or *IT*) on a cold night at the Roundhouse in Chalk Farm. Miles, 'We did fliers for the *IT* launch printed on a letterpress. We printed thousands and gave them away or mailed them.' Using Hoppy's address book, invitations circulated throughout the underground.

At a staircase curved around the brick Roundhouse, Miles and Hoppy greeted each guest with a sugar cube. Assumed to contain LSD, none did, though street pharmacists congregated inside by thin, fluted steel pillars and sold or gave away acid. Strange characters materialised from nowhere, selling trips to punters.

The room was dominated by cast-iron pillars circling its dirty concrete floor, topped by a conical roof soaring to an apex overhead, its slats radiating. Like much of psychedelia, *IT* was launched into the future amid the remains of the past. Emboldened by technology, drugs and youth, a golden dawn was being unlocked in buildings resonating with the industrial revolution.

Hoppy says, 'The Roundhouse was very cold. Playwright Arnold Wesker considered himself a socialist and made a successful interaction with the trade union movement, "art for the masses". He set up Centre 42, his main interest theatre, a difficult art form to propagate to the masses at any time. He persuaded Gilbey's Gin to let him take over the Roundhouse as trade union people's cultural theatre. I worked for Wesker as photographer. He didn't do anything with it. I said, "Arnold, look,

here's £50, let us use the Roundhouse." Wesker didn't participate, in a different space altogether. Wesker was serious, probably remained so.'

When Joe Boyd saw two and a half thousand people lined up along the road he knew the tide was turning, 'The underground spirit was made manifest at London Free School concerts, and the *IT* launch.'

A six-foot green gelatine was laid across a plastic sheet. 'The giant six-foot jelly at the *IT* launch was a classic English thing. "We're having a party, let's make a great big jelly!" We did, made from a bath,' recalls Miles. 'The Pink Floyd backed their van into it and knocked it over. Steve Abrams said the jelly never set, was still slushy, and gelling on a big plastic sheet so one could pull it out. The bath was being held by wooden supports and Syd and Pip Carter pulled away wood to use for their lightshow. The whole thing collapsed, splashing jelly everywhere. Mike Westbrook got naked and covered in paint and crawled along wallpaper. I paid Soft Machine £12 10/- and £15 to the Pink Floyd, because they had a lightshow. Soft Machine had a motorcycle on which they had contact mikes, and gave people rides on.'

International Times reported, 'Mainly atmospherics: two and a half thousand people dancing about in that strange, giant round barn. Darkness, only flashing lights, people in masks, and girls half-naked. Others were standing about wondering what the hell was going on. Pot smoke, now and then a bottle breaking; somebody looks as if he might get violent, much tension about. The Pink Floyd, psychedelic pop group, did weird things to the feel of the event with their scary feedback sounds, slide projections playing on their skin (drops of paint run riot on the slides to produce outer space/prehistoric textures on the skin), spotlights flashing on them in time with a drum beat.

'Soft Machine, another group with new ideas, drove a motorbike into the place, in and around pillars that held up that gallery we had been warned wasn't all that safe. Simon Posthuma and Marijke Koger, the Amsterdam couple, designed an interesting cubicle with coloured screens and nets. In suitable dress, they read palms and told fortunes.'

'Simon and Marijke came around Cromwell,' says Duggie Fields. 'Friends of mine, we went around in their multicoloured painted Rolls. They painted the big mural at the Apple Boutique in 1968.' The Dutch couple migrated to London from Ibiza and formed design partnership The

Fool, which produced clothes, an insert for the Beatles next album, and designed the group's Apple Boutique.

A 1960 Buick convertible sat at the centre of the Roundhouse, painted in pop art stripes by Binder, Edwards and Vaughan. The artists exhibited a painted cobra belonging to Tara Browne inside the Robert Fraser Gallery. Browne died six weeks later, after speeding at a hundred miles-per-hour through town with girlfriend Suki Poitier in his Lotus Élan. Some said he was high on LSD. The first underground casualty had just turned twenty-one.

Binder, Edwards and Vaughan's automobiles spun around London in staggering colour combinations that straddled pop art and psychedelic art. 'We began with gesso sanded to glass-like finish,' Edwards explains. 'We mixed household gloss paint with Flamboyant Enamel used by fairground painters, strong vibrant colours. The quality was evident on our next venture – customised cars. We didn't expect anyone to have cars painted without first seeing an example. To set the ball rolling we painted our own Convertible 60 Buick Electra. We worked by hand directly onto the vehicle. All gradation/blending was done by hand. We never used spray guns.'

'In another part of the Roundhouse, Bob Cobbing and the London Film Coop gave an all-night film show featuring films like *Scorpio Rising, Towers Open Fire*, under the most difficult conditions,' *IT* reported. 'The audience stood in front of projectors, on top of cables, on top of Bob Cobbing. Yet the films went on, just the right setting for those films. Burroughs's inner space disappearance in *Towers Open Fire* somehow had more impact from vibrations from the "party".

'"Famous" people turned up: Antonioni and Monica Vitti, Paul McCartney disguised as an Arab, Kenneth Rexroth. Several things went wrong. That narrow entrance for an unpleasant start, that communal toilet that ended up in flood. A giant jelly made in a bath for the party was run over by a bicycle. After the party, crowds caused a traffic jam in the streets outside. A relief that something has at last happened in the Roundhouse, a good party. To prove something is going on in London, another, bigger, better one is being planned.'

In *Gong Dreaming,* Daevid Allen described the *IT* launch as 'one of the most revolutionary events in the history of English alternative music

and thinking. First recognition of rapidly spreading socio-cultural revolution that had its parallel in the States. New Year came bringing inexpressible change in the air.'

Below the first lightshow gantry in London the crowd, in costumes and finery, milled around an abandoned haywain that served as part of the stage. Soft Machine played at 9:00pm. A motorcycle, parked onstage, had contact mikes fitted on its cylinder. Revved at intervals through psychedelic jazz improvisations, the motorbike blasted out exhaust sounds. Halfway through Soft Machine's set, all the lights were shut off. In the dark came the amplified voice of Japanese artist Yoko Ono, staging a happening. 'Touch the person next to you,' Ono whispered. The startled audience responded, reaching out in the dark. Asking the reserved audience to touch a total stranger was tantamount to a pearl diver touching a poison jellyfish. Embarrassed laughter resounded around the room. Lights flashed back on and Soft Machine dropped into 'Fred the Fish'.

Ono, from experimental arts movement Fluxus, was soon familiar to the underground. Her latest project was filming bare backsides for *Film No. 4,* known to all as (what else) 'Bottoms'. Weeks later, she met John Lennon at her *Unfinished Objects and Paintings* show at Indica. 'Yoko Ono came around to Cromwell Road,' says Duggie Fields, 'she wanted me be in her "Bottoms" movie, which I found uninteresting. Now I wish I'd gone and talked to Yoko, even had my bottom filmed, because Ono was an interesting woman.'

'We had a good relationship with Yoko,' remembers Keith Rowe. 'She stayed at Cornelius Cardew's flat. AMM played the opening of her exhibition. We knew Ono well.' Not everyone felt the same. 'Yoko Ono's happenings were boring, the most boring artist I'd ever met,' remarks Hoppy.

Firdsi, an Underground habitué, says, 'I went to Yoko Ono's "Bottoms" audition but decided I wasn't confident enough to pull down my trousers to be auditioned. I met Yoko but thought her pretentious. Everyone thought they were so damn important, all the artists and writers. Some were fascinating, like Bill Burroughs. The two from The Fool I couldn't stand; loved their work, couldn't abide them.'

As Soft Machine finished, Pink Floyd began on the stage opposite. With house lights off and lightshow on, the low, ominous ‘Astronomy Dominé’ rumbled to life. On a huge tarpaulin across the back walls beamed the lightshow. Pink Floyd’s show, though primitive, made an impression on the assembled crowd. Paul McCartney gave them the thumbs up as they played.

Dudley Edwards watched, perched on the psychedelic Pontiac. ‘I thought they were terrific. Syd brought something to the mix sadly missed – and never recaptured – after his departure. I loved the experimental nature of what they were doing with time.’

In ‘Interstellar Overdrive’, Pink Floyd’s live centrepiece throughout Syd’s tenure in the group, Barrett’s brutal barré chord riff, precursor for a thousand leaden heavy-metal riffs, evoked rockets roaring to life. Wide-open improvisation was bracketed by the opening riff and its restatement at the end, which suggested vast space, inner and outer. The central riff evokes a countdown. With each descending barré chord, we are readied for takeoff into abstraction. After the thunder and flash, Pink Floyd propels listeners into never-ending space. From its scalar riff to the complex sound pictures generated in the improvisation, to the final thunderous restatement of theme, ‘Interstellar Overdrive’ mirrored turbulence and emptiness.

As a sound collage, ‘Interstellar Overdrive’ mapped the psychedelic experience. The first to collate rock with space, the number harboured complex cascading microtonal notes, with blasting gale-force chords hurtling across infinite chromatic staircases. Not fully embracing AMM’s complete abstraction, the number was arranged like jazz composition, with statement of theme, exploration, restatement of theme – rather than pop’s traditional verse-chorus-verse model. Here, a connection to free jazz is explicit, moving past standard jazz improvisation, orbiting Waters’s relentless E chord. Root chord improvisation held by tone.

Halfway through, ‘Interstellar Overdrive’ settled into near silence. Silvery *glissandi* echoed, like insects skittering over glass, as swell-distorted *glissando* guitar trailed across the sound spectrum like a comet. Waters played an ominous two-chord droning bass motif in the background, with Barrett’s single-note repeats echoed by Mason’s snare. Here, Barrett stood at infinity, awed. Space so vast as to lack dimension

yet seem finite. In space made static, Barrett aimed to make the unseen visible.

Journalist Hunter Davies scoffed in the *Sunday Times:* 'The Pink Floyd played throbbing music while bizarre coloured shapes flashed. Someone made a mountain of jelly, which people ate at midnight. Another person parked his motorbike in the middle of the room – all apparently very psychedelic.' Andrew King bullshitted with Davies: 'We don't call ourselves psychedelic. We don't deny it. We don't confirm it either. People who want to make up slogans can.'

'It's totally anarchistic, cooperative anarchy,' Waters insisted. 'A complete realisation of aims of psychedelia. If you take LSD, what you experience depends entirely on whom you are. Our music may give you the screaming horrors or throw you into screaming ecstasy. Mostly the latter. We find our audiences stop dancing, standing there totally grooved with mouths open.'

On 31 October, Pink Floyd's management incorporated as Blackhill Enterprises, named after a Welsh farmhouse that King and Jenner owned. 'Blackhill Enterprises was a partnership between us and the Floyd, all cosmic,' said Jenner. 'This made it tricky when we broke up. We were going to be alternative, working together and everything democratic and groovy. We were incredibly inexperienced in cash flow and business management.' With earnings to be split six ways, between managers and group, they bought all their own equipment, including hire purchase payments. Wages were negligible.

Jenner and King had integrity. Lacking in business acumen, they were honourable – a quality as rare as pink diamonds in the music business. Though they wanted to be famous rock-band managers, undeniable go-getters, the pair had little in common with the shady Denmark Street music-biz sharpies.

June Child lodged at flats that housed Jenner, King, and Roger Waters, their girlfriends, many Burmese cats and offices. As Pink Floyd started getting press, the telephone buzzed all day with reporters, agents and labels. Child, on the dole, fielded calls for months. One day she said, 'Look, this is a joke. You need a secretary. Pay me fifteen quid a week.'

She fielded a call from Los Angeles scene fixture Kim Fowley, whose freaky 1965 single 'The Trip' led to semi-hits in Britain and America. Interested in signing Pink Floyd, Fowley saw them at the Roundhouse with Mike Sinclair and Mark Wirtz-Peters from EMI. Sinclair passed on Pink Floyd due to their lack of evident singles, but wrote to Jenner and King suggesting they record a demo to take around to record companies. Instead of hooking up with Pink Floyd, Fowley produced Soft Machine's first single.

The day after signing with Blackhill, Pink Floyd drove to the grandiosely titled Thompson Private Recording Company in Hemel Hempstead, to record 'Interstellar Overdrive' and Barrett's 'Stoned Alone'. Run from an old curmudgeon's house, the crude two-track studio was inexpensive. An accurate reflection of their live show from necessity, the two-track machine let them record live in one go.

'Interstellar Overdrive' ran for fifteen minutes, soundtrack to a short film by Syd's Cambridge friend Anthony Stern, *San Francisco*. With a heavy debt to surf rock, Barrett started with rhythmic attack and double-picked staccato melody lines awash with reverb. Wright played his Farfisa organ with all the stops out, a noisy wash as Mason banged away in march time, maintaining a steady pulse. Barrett amply used techniques learnt from Keith Rowe, with whirring slide effects, and emerged from his cocoon free of noticeable stylistic antecedents. When Pink Floyd set about their songs in the studio, hesitance was gone, leaving raw intensity. 'Stoned Alone' (or 'I Get Stoned'), also recorded, was a bare demo Syd sang with acoustic guitar.

On 'Interstellar Overdrive' extreme dynamics echo the impulse behind free jazz. A Barrett favourite at Earlham was John Coltrane's *Ascension*. That Barrett liked *Ascension* speaks volumes, a seventy-nine-minute cacophony interspersed with lyrical solos, and upwards of one hundred chord changes a minute. Coltrane's scales and stacked chords proved inspirational for players as diverse as Butterfield, Rowe and McGuinn, who – if not grasping his staggering technique – nonetheless applied his inspiration. One precedent for feedback and echo-laden improvisation was Coltrane's 'sheets of sound'. Rowe says, 'A block of sound was the antithesis of punctuated hi-hat sound. To clear some space for yourself, you have to have a new area. A long continuous drone, like

La Monte Young, or music saxophonist Evan Parker would describe as "laminal", layers stacked like laminated wood. This comes from Coltrane, also Eastern time signatures that weren't Afro-American.'

Indian ragas also provided a model for displacing time in ascending and descending scales based on melody and modes, rather than time signature or fixed chords. LSD shifted awareness so that an omnipresent *now* appeared to obviate time.

Coltrane took jarring free jazz, dispensed with modality and time signature, and made outer space an explicit metaphor for improvisation. His methodical quest led him to remarkable, if difficult, musical expression. As he approached the end of his life, Coltrane recorded *Interstellar Space.*

Barrett was a primitive compared with technical guitarists like Eric Clapton. Where excess form hemmed others in, Barrett dispensed with restrictive strictures. When no one tells you what you are doing is wrong, creativity flourishes. Barrett's rejection of formal technique stirred him to treat the guitar as one tool among many. Many traditionalist rock guitarists view his simpler chords with disdain, preferring David Gilmour's stricter technique.

Only recently has Barrett begun to receive due credit for his innovations. Retaining well-grounded and intuitive structure, however limited his complex chords were, Syd forged ahead into the unknown.

Echo delay found great exposition in Syd's guitar work. By definition, an echo is repetition of sound caused by reflection of sound waves off a surface. Echo forms such integral part of Barrett's work one wonders what he tried to reflect with his repeats: picture in sound, memory beyond recall, a remnant of a feeling or dream? As Thoreau wrote in *Walden*: 'The echo is, to some extent, an original sound. Therein is the magic and charm. Not merely repetition… but partly the voice of the wood.'

Barrett's echoes created chimerical structures, like a mirage inside a dream. Echo, in Barrett's hands, expanded guitar from wires and bare circuits into a dream generator. Author Simon Reynolds wrote, 'Syd Barrett was one of the first guitarists to use wah-wah, echo box, feedback and slide guitar to vaporise rock, replacing the riff with radiation.'

Barrett has been feted as the father of space rock, a vaporous genre evoking space through effects and clashing noise and minimalism, distortion and ambience. Roger Waters issued an extraordinary refutation: 'All that stuff about Syd starting the space-rock thing is just so much fucking nonsense. He was completely into Hilaire Belloc. All his stuff was whimsical, heavily rooted in English literature. Syd had one song that had anything to do with space, "Astronomy Dominé", sum total of Syd's writing about space. Yet there's this whole fucking mystique about how he was the father of it all. A load of old bollocks, it all happened afterwards.'

In a subsequent EMI press release, Waters and Barrett stated that they favoured reading science fiction and fairytales respectively. Barrett said the outer-space angle to Pink Floyd's music derived from listening to the BBC Radiophonic Workshop's oscillating sound effects in *Journey into Space* and television shows like *Quatermass* 'when I was about fifteen, so that could be where it came from'.

Barrett had taken childhood memories of Dan Dare and his missions through space, spliced them to astronomy lectures from school, fed that through the sieve of LSD and invented what could be termed 'space rock'.

Books like Robert Heinlein's *Stranger in a Strange Land*, Frank Herbert's *Dune* trilogy, *Childhood's End* by Arthur C. Clarke and sundry American Marvel comics meant fantasy, mysticism and science fiction loomed large in Barrett's consciousness. LSD suggested infinity – outer space was the closest tangible metaphor, electronic echo the best tool for approximating infinity in sound. Barrett's visits to Cromwell Road furthered this synthesis. Fantasy, occult and sci-fi formed a cat's cradle around his initial inspirations – nature, fairytales and poetry. Books circulated between flats.

John Esam was intoxicated with philosopher P.D. Ouspensky, and mystic G.I. Gurdjieff. Ouspensky's *The Fourth Dimension* dovetailed neatly with the LSD hall of mirrors. 'I call mysticism all cases of intensified feeling and abstract knowing.' Gurdjieff's *The Fourth Way* stressed: 'The more a man understands what he is doing, the greater the results of his efforts. The results of work in proportion to consciousness of the work.'

Frequent visitor Stanislas Klossowski de Rola (aka ‘Stash’) recalled, ‘Everybody was mystical. We all shared this preoccupation with mysticism, magic, esotericism. We all had our own views on psychedelics in self-discovery.’

Stash and Nigel became intensely interested in alchemy, and Arthurian legends of the Holy Grail. At Cromwell, LSD visions and mysticism merged, with residents disseminating philosophy along with acid. Poet George Andrews called LSD ‘the Void in crystal form, lightning of the gods, jade wine of the immortals’ and told *IT*, ‘I smoke pot every day. I take LSD about once every ten days. LSD is pot carried to the nth power.’

A nexus for underground (and illicit) activities, Donovan enshrined 101 Cromwell Road in pop lore with his lyrics for ‘Sunny South Kensington’. Painters, musicians, eccentrics, mystics and freaks mixed with film stars, pop icons and Chelsea aristocrats. (Donovan sang of Jean-Paul Belmondo and Mary Quant getting ‘stoned to say the least’). The cultural concentration in London ensured parties where Phil May and Viv Prince of the Pretty Things arrived with Russian ballet dancer Nureyev, singer Judy Garland and Stones guitarist Brian Jones.

‘People were in and out all the time for LSD,’ recalls Nigel Lesmoir-Gordon. ‘Between our rooms was a peculiar man, Alberto Polyblanc, a lecturer, total mystery and hermit. In the flat on the top Duggie Fields lived, and Dick Beck. Upstairs, where Syd later lived, they were all students.’ Beck, an aspiring photographer, was a little blonde guy with a teenage girlfriend, Nina. Fields recalled ‘a girl there who had a relationship with Hendrix and talked about “Jimi” all the time’.

‘Vince Taylor, the rock star, came back from being in France and came over to Cromwell,’ recalls Nigel. ‘He had been taking a lot of LSD and figured out this grand cosmology where all the different rock stars represented Greek mythological deities. Pantheons of gods that he’d figured out, and were interchangeable. Taylor figured he’d take over P.J. Proby’s place in this pantheon! His explanation went on for hours, and was very entertaining.’

Taylor burst out of the tube station at Leicester Square with a London map, laid it on the ground, and insisted to a young David Bowie that alien visitations were about to occur across the city. The visitation of

energy on London had much to do with LSD. What seemed fact was in question, and some let their imaginations run wild.

One person's chaos is another's pleasure. 'There were always people at Cromwell,' recalls Jenny Lesmoir-Gordon. 'One gorgeous girl, Nina – sixteen, if that – spent one whole summer smoking opium, and not going out. We didn't see her as dysfunctional. Her mother had a problem with it, and called the police. A girl turned up who was mentally subnormal, about eleven. We didn't know where she came from. Hester Page and Sue Kingsford found her on the street and brought her in. We kept her for the weekend. She went home but kept running away to Cromwell; the police were always after her. She was in care somewhere and never had such a good time as when she was with us. She was allowed to be part of things.'

On 18 November, Pink Floyd played a final gig at Hornsey, 'Philadelic Music for Simian Hominids'. Their informal tutorship was complete. The Advanced Studies Group provided the lightshow, impressive, if academic and static. 'At Hornsey they were into a much more serious mixed-media light and sound workshop with special projectors and equipment,' Wright noted. 'We never got into it in the same way they did, taking it seriously. We were far too busy being a rock'n'roll band getting some success.'

The next night Pink Floyd played at the Technical College in Canterbury, Kent. The *Kent Herald* reported: 'Flashing lights, slide projection, thunderous atmospheric sounds and incense were the essence of the psychedelic Pink Floyd concert held on Saturday. Those watching were a little mystified, but after the first rather frightening discordant notes began dancing and gradually relaxed. An enjoyable if somewhat odd evening.'

Rick Wright told the *Herald* that the performance was 'completely spontaneous. We just turned up the amplifiers and tried it, thought about it, and it developed from there. There is probably more co-ordination between members of our group than in any pop group. We play far more like a jazz group than anything else because we have to be together to produce the right sound. Most of our act is spontaneous and unrehearsed. It just comes when we are onstage. It does sometimes get to a point where it is a wow. That is when it works, which is not always.'

The pity was that PA systems were ill equipped to handle Pink Floyd's expanded vistas. Frustrated, the band nagged Jenner and King to replace the stolen PA system. Barrett got a fifty-watt Selmer Truvoice Treble 'n Bass 50 Mk II with matching 'All-Purpose 50' speaker cabinet 2x12. Selmer amps flashing green lights pulsated with tremolo effect. Onstage, Selmer Goliath cabinets and Stereomaster guitar-amplifier heads, and four Selmer TV/100 PA amplifier heads, made a tremendous roar.

Using the Binson's volume input and Selmer's wattage, Syd went into overdrive, past tonal breakup into saturated gain. In film clips, Syd is forever gingerly adjusting the volume input knob on Binson, raising input from his guitar through the Binson's valves for saturated output to the Selmer amplifier. Purchased at the Selmer music shop on Charing Cross Road, the combo was unbelievably loud at a time when thirty watts was the norm. The Selmer amplifier had vicious high-end treble and barking bass grunt that Pink Floyd used to fine effect.

Barrett made merry with high wattage, adding a new dimension to his adventurous playing; sculpting echo from massed gadgets and amplifiers. Increased volume did not resolve the problem of the band being unable to hear themselves onstage. Without onstage monitors, bands relied on slap-back echo from the back of the halls they played. With Barrett and Wright's textured modes in the foreground, the rhythm section drove forward in relentless march. They solidified instrumental merry-making into a ferocious flying machine.

In *International Times*, the most effective part of the new broadsheet was a back-page 'What's Happening' section printed so small a magnifying glass was needed to find what percolated underground. From psychedelic shows to Donne sonnets, London was dotted with small events staged on the cheap. Editors hoped to find events that didn't get much publicity, and link emergent underground scenes in Amsterdam, Prague and New York.

Hoppy laughs, evaluating *IT*'s success at connecting various scenes. 'I suppose partly successful, about thirty-two percent! Clearly, an expression of cultural interchange, putting it on paper, it then became a thing in itself. You have to put it in its context – *East Village Other, Village Voice*, and then *Oz*, which was interesting. In various other papers

in non-English speaking countries, English was the lingua franca of that movement.'

International Times was essential for connecting the disparate dots of the underground. With 'You can get IT here' signs placed in hip boutiques, record shops and booksellers, the publication's bi-monthly circulation grew to around three thousand copies. Sold on the street by freaks in multicoloured attire, this method of distribution became a source of income for underground habitués. 'London was like a very big small town,' observes Firdsi. 'Everyone lived in certain neighbourhoods and knew each other. You'd run into people in the corner grocery like if you lived in the country, and chat.'

Underground groovers flipped open *International Times* to find: '*Psychedelia: the Pink Floyd – mixed media show. London Free School at All Saints Hall, Powis Gardens, W11, 8:00pm – London's farthest out group in interstellar overdrive stoned alone astronomy domini – an astral chant and other numbers from their space-age book.'*

On 29 November, Pink Floyd played their final gig at All Saints Hall. Four hundred showed up on a cold Tuesday night. Larry Nolan, early lead guitarist in Soft Machine, wrote in *IT*: 'Since I last saw the Pink Floyd they've got hold of bigger amplifiers, new light gear and a rave from Paul McCartney. This time I saw them at Powis Gardens, last of their regular shows here. Their work is largely improvisation and lead guitarist Syd Barrett shoulders most of the burden of providing continuity and attack in the improvised parts. He was providing a huge range of sounds with new equipment, from throttled shrieks to mellow feedback roars.

'Visually the show was less adventurous. Three projectors bathed the group, the walls and sometimes the audience in vivid colour. The colour was fairly static and there was no searching for the brain alpha rhythms by chopping the focus of the images.'

Nick Mason dryly noted, 'I remember that night and I never could put my finger on where we went wrong. Looking back, I blame the lighting man.'

The Roundhouse quickly became an important venue, with a bewildered Arnold Wesker's telephone ringing off the hook. The Pink Floyd played three Roundhouse raves in December. At the

‘Psychodelphia vs. Ian Smith’ rave, promoters emulated the *IT* launch. Adverts for the 10:00pm until dawn event announced with due solemnity, ‘Screaming *thousands*, underground films, poets, *happenings*, with the essential Pink *Floyd* and the Ram Holder Messengers. Bring your own happenings plus ecstatogenic substances. Drag optional. *In aid of Zimbabwe.’*

Days later at the Royal Albert Hall for an Oxfam benefit, Pink Floyd were so out of place among the pop bands and comedians that they were mocked from the stage. Nonetheless, they joined in for a sing-along of ‘Yellow Submarine’. If they had to tap dance to fame, so be it – all were keen to be pop stars.

On 7 December, Peter, Susie, Syd, Lindsay and Alan Beam attended the annual performance of George Frideric Handel’s classical oratorio *Messiah* at the Albert Hall. Wynne-Willson says, ‘There had been an emergent underground in London for a good while by the time we trouped off to see Handel’s *Messiah*.’

The tenor of the times struck them as they each took a drop of LSD. Recitatives, mass choruses and arias took on a mystical shine as Malcolm Sargent mightily conducted the Alexandra Choir and New Philharmonia Orchestra. (Handel wrote in awe: ‘I did see all Heaven before me, and the great God Himself.’) Syd was overwhelmed by Handel’s soaring voices rattling the roof of the Albert Hall in oratorio, as massed singers sang in cycles backed by the orchestra.

Back at Earlham Street, in raptures, windows open to the cold, they painted walls fluorescent colours and admired the illustrations of William Blake, as Syd blasted through guitar, echo box and amplifier on full setting. At volume, through the new amps, the Binson had rich saturation. Raising echo to an extreme, he unlocked a language. Handel interpolated with avant-garde and blues. *Glissandi* took on majestic scope as he exorcised the ghost of surf rock, and compounded classical inspiration with fragmentary blues riffs, howling string bends and Binson sustain. Barrett transmogrified his myriad influences through radical reinvention. The fusion of jazz, blues, avant-garde and classical was underway.

On 20 December, Pink Floyd were back in Cambridge to play the Art School Christmas Party at the Tech. Emo, Pip and Fizz came to fetch Caius College student Mick Rock at his rooms and whisk him off to see their friend Syd's band. All the way to the Tech, Pip and Emo spoke in effusive terms of Syd. Rock said, 'Fantastic, I'd never seen anything like it. We were all into mainstream pop and soul. To see the improvisation and all the lights was amazing.' The frenetic lightshow and overpowering volume gave Rock a feeling he was slipping through a hole in the time-space continuum. 'A bolt from another dimension – magical moments stumbling over some great and wonderful secret,' he recalled.

When they nipped outside to smoke a joint, Emo and Pip introduced Mick to Lindsay Corner. Lindsay took Rock to meet Syd, who invited Mick to a get together in his mother's cellar. 'Syd was all smiles, positive, strong and clear-eyed,' Rock recounted. 'An innocence and sweetness about him.' Sitting cross-legged in the cellar at Hills Road, Rock was impressed as Syd rolled a joint with quick, nimble hand. Nicely stoned, they listened to blues and talked about Italian painter Amedeo Modigliani, until the morning light peeked through the narrow slot window.

Syd and Mick bonded as they discussed Arthur C. Clarke's science-fiction novel *Childhood's End.* In the book, highly evolved children tap into mental powers parents dismissed as fairytales, connecting humanity with an interstellar Overmind. Ushered into mile-wide spaceships by alien Overlords, the children leave the planet.

Syd urged Mick to read Robert Heinlein's *Stranger in a Strange Land*, where Valentine Smith, raised on Mars, is schooled in mystic arts. Returning to earth, Smith instructs followers in 'water sharing', which allows them to 'grok' each other in telepathic understanding. The communal lifestyle spreads until earth is in religious revolt.

Syd and friends saw themselves as mystic revolutionaries, whose LSD awareness would shake the world. 'I had an amazing first connection with Syd. Cheerful, open and talkative, Syd seemed to get along well with everyone. Sunny, up and friendly,' Rock remembered. He would later photograph Syd in indelible images as a creature out of space and time. Despite his makeup, Barrett still affected Carnaby Street striped shirts and mod trousers, wispy moustache and odd plimsolls.

Just as he had demonstrated by the gift of marbles to his childhood classmate, Syd was once again aware that things were about to change. At Christmas, Syd telephoned Jenny Spires. 'Syd rang to say he wanted to play me a song he'd written and collected me from home. Adapting chords and cadence from the Stones' 'Play With Fire' and the Kinks' 'See My Friends', he fitted music around words he had spent a month perfecting, about a suburban deviant with a perverse itch under his respectable clothes.

'I was in Cambridge at the time I started to write the song,' revealed Syd. 'I pinched the line about "moonshine washing line" from Roger because he had an enormous washing line in the back garden of his house. Then I thought, "Arnold must have a hobby," and it went on from there. Arnold Layne happened to dig dressing up in women's clothing.'

Syd and Jenny went into the cellar; Syd sang 'Arnold Layne' over twelve-string as his beloved black cat, Rover Angelica, nestled in Jenny's lap. As a gift, Syd solemnly presented the animal to Jenny. Touched, Spires says, 'How beautiful that cat was, and look at the name – so lyrical.'

Impressed with the *IT* launch and All Saints gigs, Joe Boyd suggested to Hoppy that they should launch a club. Hoppy says, 'I was working with Joe Boyd. He said, "This is going well, if I find a place in the West End, why don't we do it there?" The ostensible reason for UFO was to pay debts from a scam that didn't work, the London Free School. A simultaneous synchronicity, a global culture. If it weren't us, it would have been someone else, no grand plan. We said we'd try it twice. We were amazed it worked. UFO was the first all-night dance club.'

'One reason UFO began was Elektra fired me,' explains Boyd. 'I had to choose to stay in London or not. Managing the Incredible String Band wasn't bringing in enough money to live on. Hoppy was always broke, both looking for cash flow. I don't know there was any difference in our respective needs for cash. Not that we made much money. After paying expenses, rent and groups, we'd put half in his pocket and half in mine every Sunday morning at 7:00am. That's how we lived.'

They combed the West End without luck, and ventured north to old bohemian Fitzrovia off Oxford Street. Boyd found the Blarney, an Irish

dancehall and pub, below the Berkeley Cinema at 31 Tottenham Court Road. The building's owner, a Mr Gannon, agreed to let the ballroom downstairs for £15. Gannon was baffled as to why they did not want alcohol served until Boyd explained they wanted to stay open all night. Puzzled, the landlord shrugged and claimed the soft drinks concession. As soon as the cinema closed doors at 10:30pm, they could open until dawn.

UFO opened before tube trains stopped running at midnight and continued until they started up again at dawn. This represented a personal crusade for Miles, who found pub closing times and tube stoppage not conducive to fun. The first all-night nightclub began.

Literally underground, the club consisted of a long ballroom with a low ceiling, a shiny sprung dancefloor and a silver mirror ball (a remnant of its 1920s heyday as Rector's Club). In the thirties, as the Carlton Dancehall, music-hall acts and jazz bands catered to Fitzrovia intellectuals and West End revellers straying up the road. Latterly, Blarney's was an Irish immigrant dancehall with shamrocks pinned on bland acoustic tiles. Little more than an old dancehall, liquid lights and acid rock soon made for a magnificent atmosphere. Miles says, 'UFO was wonderful, I went to all but two, like a private club.'

Hoppy and Boyd couldn't decide whether to call the club 'Night Tripper', or 'UFO' ('Underground Freak-Out' – Hoppy's choice). Typically, they combined the two. UFO became the psychedelic dungeon of lore. Handbills printed on Hoppy's offset machine featured Pete Townshend's girlfriend Karen with a wavy 'Night Tripper' legend painted across her face. Michael English said, 'The little Night Tripper poster with Karen was the first poster I did for the underground, before I teamed up with Nigel.' A second handbill featured Barrett in silhouette onstage at All Saints. Hoppy, Boyd, Kate Heliczer and Nigel Waymouth handed them out to freaks they'd been seeing one Saturday on the Portobello Road.

The Saturday market on Portobello Road in Notting Hill began with antiques stalls, lining both sides, running riot down the long sloping road to Ladbroke Grove. Mandarin Books provided underground literature. Record-buyers met at Musicland and Discordia for West Coast imports. The boutique I Was Lord Kitchener's Valet featured an impressive line in

Crimean War regimental military coats in blood-red wool, lined with braided gold thread out front and Victorian shawls and faded silk costume dresses in the back. Whimsical objects adorned the walls and ceiling. Here a giant plastic eyeball, there outsized crêpe paper sunflowers.

Art Nouveau posters by Alphonse Mucha and illustrated books by Arthur Rackham, dented silver carafes, spindly umbrellas with ivory handles, and chipped porcelain tea services formed a backdrop for an undulating mass along Portobello. Curving to Ladbroke Grove, West Indian immigrant grocers hawked fresh food or milled outside tenement homes. At the Rio and the Mangrove, West Indian cafés, cannabis was discretely sold. Here, travelling Motown and Stax artists hobnobbed with slumming aristocrats, poets and black nationalists. At Finch's Pub, freaks ruminated over the meaning of meaning, and life continued at cantering clip.

This much-embroidered mythical Eden underground existed across several dozen flats in London, nurtured in rank cellars, old dancehalls, and ramshackle outdoor markets. In expeditions around Britain under the spell of psychedelic drugs, a brief unfolding in the fabric of time and space occurred, where visions of imponderable beauty and magnitude hinted that a new world was imminent, one reached by sheer force of mind.

A miniature universe where money was a secondary concern, and the essentials of life – shelter, clothing, music and dope – could be readily scuffled up. In the Eden underground, for a collection of moments, a horde of musicians, poets, artists and performers gathered force in crumbling Victorian terraced houses throughout Notting Hill and Kensington.

They put the tools of their trade to work, creating a thin skein of magic that permeated the bare walls of flats. Indian fabrics, brass bells, glass lamps, silken scarves, and rich velvet purchased for love or money on Portobello Road, scavenged from the attics of the past, or brought back from travels to Asia and Africa. The Empire was gone. Clowns and jugglers, dealers and poets, entrepreneurs and musicians, intellectuals and painters, dancers and ravers, performers and quasi-aristocratic layabouts. All were important in the underground.

The seaman's strike ended and London lit up *en masse*. Firdsi says, 'The city was swimming in hash. One got a block of Afghani temple hash stamped with the official seal, about the size of a construction brick, for £5 pounds from Jamaicans in Brixton. Once, a cargo ship from the Middle East was impounded by the authorities, full to the bulkhead with Afghani hash. The whole city had to sit and wait for customs to clear it before it could be distributed. The hash was packed in mothballs and the dogs missed detecting it. When released there was so much hash in London it was unreal. You could walk through the streets smoking a British bomber joint and no one paid you any attention. The cops ignored it.'

On 23 December, *Ready Steady Go!* signed off for the last time and a new weekend arrived. 'UFO Presents Night Tripper' opened its doors at 10:30pm. Lightshows by Mark Boyle projected from a scaffold in the corner onto a muslin cloth hung behind the groups. Pink Floyd inaugurated UFO, the underground locus for the next year. UFO ran until the early morning, screening *The Hidden Fortress* by Japanese director Akira Kurosawa until the tube trains ran again.

At UFO, the Floyd, Soft Machine and various other bands played. Every Friday night, all night, it became the place to meet, to dance, and hang out. A scaffold was built to house the lightshow that trailed across stage and walls, controlled by Joe Gannon, Susie Gawler-Wright and Pete Wynne-Willson.

The response was immediate, with hundreds queuing downstairs. Unlike the Roundhouse, heat from lightshows and several hundred punters dispelled the freezing drafts from outside. UFO was pronounced 'u-fo' by those in the know, who knew it as 'Underground Freak-Out', and 'u-f-o' by those who didn't, and thought it stood for 'Unidentified Flying Object'.

UFO instituted membership charges of 15/-, with admission 10/-. To dodge stringent licensing laws, UFO was run as private club with membership cards. On the opening night, they gave out free memberships. No alcohol was served, though intoxicants included high-grade LSD and Lebanese hash. Soft drinks, coffee, bananas and candyfloss were dispensed from one corner. Soon, macrobiotic

vegetarian food (‘UFOOD’) was offered. Advertisements promised ‘films, slides, heat and food’, though whatever else was to happen was often unscripted and usually depended on crowd participation.

Hoppy ensured props were on hand to stimulate the crowd. ‘Connoisseur Films had an interesting catalogue. When we played those films, we didn’t play the soundtrack. We needed an army of people with lights, projectors and slides. Today one person can do a whole club.

‘Always hair-raising wondering if you’d get enough people there, to pay expenses at the door. As promoter, your secret concern – you won’t make enough money at the door to pay for everything and make a profit. If events couldn’t pay for themselves, you’d have to stop because you couldn’t keep on losing money. When the buck stops at you then you have to be careful. Mind you, we weren’t careful. Sometimes money was short.’

Peter Jenner identified UFO nights as ‘overnight successes, by Christmas, a double-page spread in *Melody Maker* and big feature in *Queen* by Nik Cohn without even having a record. In business terms, incredibly easy. I knew Pink Floyd were breaking when I saw kids flooding round the corner to UFO with gear and bells jingling.’

Melody Maker’s Chris Welch was first to cover the scene. ‘Today in London the Bell People already have their own headquarters. UFO (it stands for Unidentified Flying Object or Underground Freak-Out) is believed to be Britain’s first psychedelic club. Happy young people waving incense danced Greek-like dances, waving frond-like hands with bells jingling, neck scarves fluttering and strange hats abounding. Pretty slides casting beams of light over the oily throng who stood or squatted in communion, digging the lightshow or listening to Love being relayed at sensible non-discotheque volume. Frequent announcements warning patrons to be cool and the fuzz might pay a call. Two young constables did pop in and seemed wholly satisfied all was well, and all was well.’

Joe Boyd told Welch: ‘The object of the club is to provide a place for experimental pop music and mixing of media, lightshows and theatrical happenings. Kids who go are the London psychedelic crowd from Notting Hill and Bayswater. There is a *laissez-faire* attitude at the club. There is no attempt to make people fit into a format. If they want to lie on

the floor, or jump on the stage they can, as long as they don't interfere with the group.'

Miles wrote in *IT*: '23 December saw "Night Tripper", advertised by poster and display. No indication who would be performing, the audience attended because they "knew" who would be there and "knew" what was happening. UFO was created by and for the original "underground", posters from Messrs English & Waymouth, and an *IT* stall by the cloakrooms. UFO was a club in that most people knew each other, met to do business, arrange their week's appointments, dinners and lunches. Hatch out *IT*, plans for Arts Lab, SOMA. Various schemes for turning the Thames flow and removing fences in Notting Hill. Activity and energy was thicker than incense.'

As Nik Cohn wrote in his classic *Today There Are No Gentlemen*: 'No cliques, no top team tables. The famous were neither fawned upon nor hassled, drawn into the full range of middle-class dissent – art students, hipsters, bohemians. Would-be disrupters were pacified, hysterics tranquilised, cynics disarmed, observers involved.'

Nick Mason remarked, 'For a brief moment there looked as if there might be some combining of activities. There would be mad actors, lightshows, recitation of poetry or verse, wandering about and cheerful chatter. Endless rock groups were what "underground" meant to people, but it was bands, poets, jugglers and all sorts. The beginning of talk about mixed-media events, music and lightshows, and we happened to have a lightshow.'

'I went to work for the *Daily Telegraph* as the underground was starting to happen,' recalls Jenny Fabian. 'I hung out in French coffee bars, because I felt French and Italian boys seemed much cooler than British boys, either public school or working class. They didn't seem to be hip, despite the odd poetic and wild ones. I found these foreigners interesting. I went to UFO on my first acid trip. We got out at Tottenham Court Road. It looked fantastic. I thought, "Well, it really is quite nice."

'I had a great time and wanted more. LSD was terribly important, wasn't it? As soon as I discovered UFO though, I wasn't going back to any Froggy coffee bars! I was off with me bell and caftan. Because of the way I am, when I go, I go completely. I went out all night and worked all day. When you're young, you can.

‘When I first went on these forays into the underground world, there wasn’t any thought of making friends with these people. Almost like an exploration, coming back and reporting on it. I was asleep on the desk at work. I didn’t last long as a freak on the *Telegraph*, I was fired. I thought, “Well, sod it!” and went to work for Dave Howson and Middle Earth. The Pink Floyd was the first free-form acid consciousness music. You could float away on their music. It went on forever and took you away somewhere.’

Fabian subsequently wrote *Groupie*, a non-fiction account save for names changed, of her exploits in the psychedelic underground. ‘The Pink Floyd started down at UFO. The first group to open people to sound and colour. I took my first trip down there when the Floyd was playing. The experience took my mind right out and I don’t think it came back the same. Syd in particular, everybody was talking about him and saying how weird he was.

‘He wrote for the group. His mind, through his words and music, came over in fragments, like signals from a freaked out fairyland, where nothing made sense and everything held meaning. I watched his shadowy figure onstage, and wondered about him. It had been difficult to see his face with all those colours flashing and swirling over him.

‘What I saw I liked. He had this thin nose, which separated sunken circles under his dark eyes. A pale skin was stretched almost unbearably tight over bones of his face. Tall and thin. His eyes had the polished look I’d seen in others who took too many trips in too short a time. I found him completely removed from the other three in the group. He was withdrawn and smiled a lot to himself.’

Artists Michael English and Nigel Waymouth were commissioned to design UFO’s posters. Boyd knew Waymouth and Hoppy knew English. They introduced them to one another and a fruitful and meteoric partnership was launched. They worked under the psychedelic moniker Hapshash and the Coloured Coat, a corruption of ‘Hatshepsut’, drawn from a book on Egyptian art found at Indica. The pair set about working on an electrifying poster for the first UFO, with pop art swirling letters spelling U-F-O in red and white on smelted gold. Their dozen posters for the club captured the ephemeral lysergic mood engendered by the crazy quilt underground.

Hapshash and the Coloured Coat's posters rejected the stark formalism of graphic design in favour of referencing the 19th-century illustrators William Morris and Aubrey Beardsley, with opium-laced flora and leaves drawn in interlaced patterns, hypnotic motifs and arabesques. Drawings by Beardsley at the Victoria & Albert Museum in South Kensington electrified the acid contingent.

The posters indicated a revival of 19th-century Orientalism, much as San Francisco hippy graphic designers drew upon Art Nouveau and the Wild West. They co-opted Indian-influenced motifs in vivid synthetic dyes, and geometric Islamic art merged in psychedelic wash. Ravishing patterns, metallic silver and golden inks, rich illustration, and spidery lettering so oblique only the 'turned on' could read it.

'We were illustrating an ideal,' stated Waymouth. 'A visual concept of what we were experiencing, the ragbag of things that assault one visually. One week we'd be doing a poster heavily visually illustrative in a nursery-rhyme way, using images from turn of the century illustrators. Next week we'd be boldly doing almost op-art things.'

Michael English recalled speeding through gloomy streets and suddenly coming across bright splashes on hoardings at building sites. Curving lips screamed in unison, 'Come to UFO, opening tonight. Everybody's welcome!' Electric pink lips lit the night with an invitation to 'Stay 'til it's light!'

Hapshash posters mirrored the underground style; exuberant colours, quasi-mystical books and arcane philosophies, along with a strong conceptual wind blowing from the East. These psychedelic artefacts best mirrored the impetus behind the movement.

Strangers spotted one another across the King's Road or Portobello and recognised that they belonged to the same team. Not as classless and free as they might have thought, but infused with tolerance nonetheless. Explosive colours in psychedelic art pushed auto-destruction into the background. Though an underlying nihilism lingered, new initiatives emerged.

Artist Dudley Edwards shared a studio/flat with Douglas Binder and David Vaughan. 'Doug and I decided we wanted something that exuded joy,' says Edwards. 'When I considered the imagery that epitomised that for me, I was taken back to my early days of rock'n'roll with teddy boys

bopping and jiving to Little Richard around the waltzer. I figured an intrinsic part of that package was fairground motifs. A folk-art worth proliferating, but in a new way. We chose a look smooth and polished, almost mechanical, with hard-edged lines and smooth gradation.

'We admired the conceptual work of Marcel Duchamp and Joseph Beuys. Binder, Edwards and Vaughan always had healthy interest in what our contemporaries were doing, in particular crews that put together *OZ* and *International Times*, as well as the pirate stations. These were DIY people like the punks that came later. We weren't consciously pushing away from anything. We were fed up of living in a grey world. We wanted to brighten things, spread some joy. Fairground imagery was synonymous with this and seemed indigenous, a British folk art. We may have been coming at it from leftfield, but to some degree, we were operating in isolation doing our own thing. Although like everyone else we were bathing in the overall ambience of the sixties.'

On 29 December, Pink Floyd played the Marquee with opening band Syn, whose Chris Squire and Peter Banks went on to form Yes. Banks told Chris Welch: 'Whatever night they played was the worst night of the week. People were bemused by a band that played one number that lasted thirty minutes under strange lighting. I must admit I didn't like them at all! Free form and very loud, well ahead of their time. Syd slid a bottleneck on his guitar and played an open-E for ten minutes. You could never hear vocals because the PA wasn't up to much.

'Syd Barrett always wore eye shadow and mascara. I wasn't into all that because Syn was still playing Motown stuff. Not many people were there, a couple dozen and a lot of empty space. Everyone was looking at watches, going, "When's this song going to end?" There wasn't much structure to their songs and they did twelve-bar blues a lot. The main attraction was the lightshow, which nobody had seen before. They'd show up, play, and leave. We didn't regard them as proper musicians. A bunch of guys making noise and wearing makeup.

'When I saw them at UFO, it was like a different band. Whereas people at the Marquee didn't know what the hell was going on, at UFO, they went down a storm because everybody was stoned out their heads.'

Nick Mason told *Mojo*: 'We were not Marquee material. We were demolished by proper bands with nice suits. We were doing abstract R&B, nasty operations on Chuck Berry material.'

David Bowie, a regular at the Marquee, both in the audience and onstage as David Jones & the Buzz, recalled his first sighting of Syd. 'Syd Barrett, with white face and black eyeliner all around his eyes. This strange presence singing in front of a band using lightshows. I thought, "Wow! A bohemian, a poet, in a rock band!"'

Bowie observed, 'Syd was a major inspiration. The few times I saw him perform at UFO and the Marquee are forever etched in my mind. So charismatic and such a startlingly original songwriter. Along with Anthony Newley, the first guy I'd heard to sing pop or rock with a British accent. His impact on my thinking was enormous. The first [performer] I had seen in the middle sixties who could decorate a stage. This strange mystical look to him, with painted black fingernails and eyes fully made up… Syd wasn't altogether of this world.'

David Bowie met Syd, though they didn't bond. 'I only met him on a couple of occasions, and then we didn't get on all that well. But I'm a great fan of his.' Bowie felt that Barrett was 'one of the most languid, poignant voices in English popular music. A superb poet and stunning performer, which has not been said about him. A hypnotic, charismatic effect onstage. The first bloke I'd seen wearing makeup in a rock band to great effect. Marc Bolan and I both noted that! We were incredibly inspired by Syd Barrett. Space mysticism around Syd we interpreted in different ways. I saw Pink Floyd at the Marquee and was inspired to write musicals.' Marc Bolan later simply stated, 'Our main influence was Syd Barrett of Pink Floyd.'

As his stagecraft developed, Syd projected charisma onstage, bringing theatrical flair to performances. Syd's hyper-dramatic touches owe much to his acting in Pinter plays and Restoration comedies at school. Before gigging with bands, rehearsals and repetition in theatre plays meant he learnt to gauge provocative gestures and motions onstage.

Wynne-Willson's theatre lighting stressed Syd's stark white face and blackened eyes, like a Japanese *kabuki* actor or a mummer's guise. Stage makeup was standard, less so Barrett's exaggerated eyeliner. Syd's look harkened back to actors of the silent era, where low-resolution film

needed blazing lighting and garish makeup to make performers' features visible.

The underground looked to the twenties for inspiration, from German Expressionist cinema to Weimar cabaret. The subsequent theatrics of glam rock and the artier end of prog took cues from the likes of Barrett, Bowie, Bolan, and Peter Gabriel.

Nancy Bacal was an acquaintance of Peter and Sumi Jenner's from the London Free School days, a Canadian journalist with flaming red hair, and a girlfriend of black power activist Michael X. 'I was a broadcast journalist freelancing with Canadian Broadcast Corporation,' explains Bacal. 'I invested much time interviewing top English groups – the Beatles countless times, all the Rolling Stones, and Ravi Shankar, encouraged by George Harrison.

'Michael X and I were having dinner at Pete and Sumi's. We were all good friends. We supped on delicate Japanese food in their three-storied doll's house mews, which felt even smaller set against hulking young lads filling the corridors and stairs. There seemed no place large enough to contain them. If my situation seemed mad with Michael, their situation also had strangeness. Pete, an honours student at LSE with heaps of future, Sumi a classical music devotee – both giving up everything to put a band together. Pete had so much faith in the project the young musicians were invited to move in. Had it been anyone but Pete I would have written it off as psychedelic madness.

'Unexpectedly during the teriyaki, I offered to record and interview Pete's group, and ship it off to one of the shows I contributed to in Toronto. I had no idea who Pink Floyd were or what they sounded like. Our small bureau office was equipped to send political feeds to Canada but not much more. This made the project deliciously risky. After all – it was the sixties.'

In the drizzling dark of London's winter, Pink Floyd squeezed into Andrew King's Peugeot and headed over to Great Portland Street. Bacal's piece for the Canadian Broadcasting Company offered vivid insight as Pink Floyd poised to soar towards fame.

Bacal says, 'After midnight the following week I ushered them up the tiny elevator – one musician at a time with amps and instruments – until

they spilled into our conservative offices. Everything turned upside down with their sheer presence. I recall them being extremely polite and sensitive to my growing concerns. I did the interview, not my best, as I knew nothing about any of them. They were shy, monosyllabic, giggly, soft-spoken and humble. I suspected I had little of interest on tape but went on to record them as promised. Being a Beatles fan, their music shocked me. I wasn't ready for that.

'Next day, the head of CBC called me into his office purple with rage. "Are you out of your mind!" he screamed. The answer was probably yes, but I preferred innovative. Apparently, people complained of the "noise" three blocks away. CBC almost lost their new lease. I had good reason to fear I would lose my freelance privileges. Curiously, I never heard about the incident again. Someone in Toronto was very happy to have received a live recording and first interview with the Pink Floyd.'

A skeletal 'Interstellar Overdrive' rumbled in the background as Bacal intoned, 'In a frenetic haze of sound and sight, a new concept of music has begun to penetrate senses of Britain's already hopped-up Beat fans. The Pink Floyd, four young musicians, light man, and equipment sadistically designed to shatter the strongest nerves. New on the London scene, they have stupefied audiences at all-night raves, church halls, the Albert Hall, and various tours in Britain. They've yet to debut on records, but perhaps the Pink Floyd are most qualified to tell you what it is all about.'

'It's not like jazz music because we all want to be pop stars,' said Syd. 'We don't want to be jazz musicians. We play for people to dance to,' Barrett added with a smile, 'they don't seem to dance much now… We play loudly, with electric guitars. We're utilising all the volume and effects you can get.'

'We're trying to develop this by using the lights,' added Mason. Waters declared, 'We do not really look upon ourselves as musicians.'

'How important is the visual aspect of the production?' asked Bacal.

'Very important,' said Barrett, Mason and Waters in unison.

'Quite a revelation to have people operating something like lights while you're playing,' observed Barrett, 'and as direct stimulus to what you're playing. Audience reaction, except on a higher level. You respond to the lights, and the lights respond back.'

Mason added, ‘There are various lights, simple flashing spotlights worked off a control board like a piano. They can be used very rhythmically. Effect lights, coloured or wet slides with liquids on them, so you get some movement. They may be actual movies, which have their own set speed and sequence that can’t be altered by operators. This changes the formation, because we tend to play to that.’

Such offhand remarks highlighted differing approaches. Barrett emphasised spontaneity in contrast to Waters and Mason’s pre-programmed approach. Even then, Pink Floyd wanted to project film rather than oil slides. After Barrett’s ousting, the band dispensed with them.

‘You hardly ever get dancing right from the beginning, you get it as a response to rhythm,’ Syd observed. ‘People just stand there, and if they work themselves into hysteria while they are there…’

‘Yes, dancing takes the form of frenzy,’ added Mason, ‘which is very good. The audience tend to be standing there, and one or two might suddenly flip out, rush forward and start leaping about.’

‘They don’t stand in a line and do the Madison,’ said Waters.

‘“Freak-out” is what they call it,’ laughed Barrett. Wright said, ‘It is an exciting thing, because this is what dancing is.’

‘This is *really* what dancing is,’ Mason chortled.

Peter Jenner leaned into the microphone, ‘The records will be different from the stage shows. With records, there is a three-minute limit… The records will have to be much more audio, written for a different situation. Listening to a gramophone in your home or on the radio is different from going into a club or watching a stage show. They are two different things, and require a different approach. We think we can do both.’

Which they did, creating a band like a two-faced Janus, pop combo on one side, and experimental rock group on the other.

All was coming along swimmingly, except that Hoppy did not anticipate opposition as the underground peeked above ground. Repression was triggered by triviality. As teenage daughters from Paddington and Westminster disappeared into the depths of Notting Hill, to all-night events at the Free School with negroes, drug addicts, free-thinkers,

cranks and worse, a telephone call to Paddington Green Police Station ensured trouble. (Emily Young says, 'I was fifteen, he was a concerned father.') The catalyst for repression came through that old bugaboo, drugs.

Poor Emily was packed off to a psychiatrist and boarding school, forbidden to return to Notting Hill. She told author Jonathon Green of 'a tremendous showdown with my parents. My father was terribly worried, went and got the police, said, "Do you realise that girls are having underage sex with odd people and taking drugs and so on." [The Free School] was busted, and Hoppy was there. I was in boarding school by then. I could understand that on one level, you wouldn't want your fifteen-year-old schoolgirl daughter to be there. At the same time, it was very creative. It really was.'

With LSD illegal, things did not augur well for the freewheeling sprites of the underground. Authorities found ways to arrest with impunity. On 30 December, like Hollingshead, Hoppy was busted for allowing dope to be smoked at his house. Zoë Harris, seventeen years old, was living in the flat along with Hoppy and Kate Heliczer. The prosecution built a case around the assertion that Hoppy was corrupting the schoolgirl with dope and living with her rather than Kate. Suzy Creamcheese missed arrest because her name was misspelt on the warrant. Unlike Hollingshead, whose life sped into methedrine-propelled disarray, Hoppy refused to curtail his activities.

Released on bail, a defiant Hoppy showed up to prepare the second UFO. The bill consisted of Pink Floyd, Fanta & Ood, and Giant Sun Trolley, with Free School Beat poet Dave Tomlin improvising on saxophone to government propaganda films. A karate demonstration followed. Late into the night, a Marilyn Monroe movie was screened amid lightshows galore.

Hoppy and Boyd contracted Mark Boyle to provide lights for the club on a permanent basis. Boyle was paid £10 flat to do the lights at each UFO ('an offer we could not refuse', Boyle said). He launched his 'Earth, Air, Fire and Water' lightshow based on the four elements. Boyle described it, laboriously, as using 'the projection of various chemical and physical reactions occurring in special containers in projectors, with amplification of the sound of the reaction, or tapes of colossal reactions

in the same medium or performed sound using the medium (i.e. rock movement, storm, fire or waves)'.

Often several lightshows ran at once. Peter says, 'At UFO, we both did lights. Mark Boyle was given free hand, a full-blown artist. He did lights in one part of UFO, always tasteful.'

'I knew Mark Boyle and his lightshow was very good,' recalls Brown. 'UFO was an artistic venture, and art-driven. UFO wasn't pop, it was experimental… Environments with light and sound. I don't think they were trying to create a movement. They were exploring.'

Australian artist Juno Gemes says, 'UFO was a cool, friendly, easy collaborative place to be and contribute to. After the performance piece/happening, most Friday nights I would stay at UFO until dawn. A magic place to be. I can't remember money changing hands, it might have. Whatever you needed was easily given to you there. That was enough for me. UFO was a great creative scene.'

Mark Boyle's Sensual Laboratory and Jack Bracelin's Fiveacre Lights had separate lightshows rigged at each corner. Boyle wore plastic gloves and goggles, mixing mad chemicals in glass Petri dishes over the blazing projector, sweat dripping from his brow. Dermot Harvey (who Miles called 'an errant biochemist, discoverer of many immiscible liquids') projected three-dimensional liquid projections onto helium-filled balloons, which were forever drifting toward ceiling fans and lights.

'Tony Scott came to me wanting to put some of his exploding plastic inflatable penis sculptures into the mix at UFO,' Gemes says. 'They worked well with film projected onto them. This was the beginning of a new collaboration. Scotty also had a project going where he found discarded film in Wardour Street dustbins. He collected this film and joined it all together as a new Duchampian film collage. Sometimes the film was cut and discarded due to censorship laws or because a bit was too cheesy. Cut together it now became something totally new. We screened these film montages at UFO projecting them onto the ravers, people dancing. Sometimes we projected onto the ceiling. All clear surfaces were covered with film at some point during the evening with the assistance of David Curtis and his crew.

'Mark Boyle created the most beautiful light shows at UFO. He used ink pigment poured onto oil in a glass dish over an epidiascope. I learnt

quite a lot from him. There were casual preparation sessions. We trusted each other and worked easily together.'

Boyle's lightshow was dynamic, with bubbles in violent orange and pink streaming up slides, heated by open flames. Sitting still, one felt as if one was inside a bubbling cauldron. Sometimes Boyle would let a projected slide incinerate to the edges. In tandem with profuse LSD and cannabis, different dynamics prevailed – fast or slow, as suited the mood or moment. Organic bubbling contrasted with unnatural colours. Being immersed in the lightshow was timeless. 'The detail was ravishing to the tripping eye,' said Hoppy. 'The scaffolding projection tower was placed so projectors could be swung round, causing watchers to move round to continue watching – a subtle way to keep people moving.'

'UFO was quite big,' recalled Boyle. 'Dark and dingy, apart from our projections. We were on a tower at the back – scaffolding with planks across. We had four projectors and got different reactions going in each one, mixing them with coloured filters. A lot of chance, as images were based on chemical reactions. Some created amazing effects. When we put acid on to perforated zinc, it would immediately attack zinc with ferocious action: pieces of zinc would fly off screen with bubbles exploding when Mike Ratledge, keyboard player for Soft Machine, was going mad on organ, or Robert Wyatt was doing his amazing drum solos. Fast-moving work, when chemicals were reaching the end of the cycle, you had to fade that and bring in something else. It was not synchronised with the music, though your brain forced the two together, making you think it was, which created something magical.' Dudley Edwards says, 'I am a great admirer of Mark Boyle and family, particularly what they have done with land art, but I did think their lightshows were boring.'

Peter Russell, of light crew for band 117, was another intermittent operator. He explains, 'I developed a "light keyboard" connected to spots placed around the band, creating complex coloured shadow patterns on the screen. Modulated by a human being "playing along" with the group was the most synchronised music-lightshow ever.'

'A typical evening at UFO began around 11:00pm with Vivaldi's *Four Seasons* loud on the sound system and our light environment all around the room,' recalled Boyle. 'When the place was full, the first rock group appeared. You might get a theatre group from the Royal Court Theatre

doing mime, followed by the Soft Machine or the Pink Floyd. I might be asked to make yellow projections while current hit "Mellow Yellow" played.

'David Medalla and the Exploding Galaxy would fill an arena with yellow objects, yellow cloth, yellow confetti, and yellow paint. A folk group would follow, and then clowns, more rock, more Bach, theatre group the People Show. At 7:00am jazz group the Sun Trolley would play. Most people would be sleeping against pillars or piles on the floor. Just the Sun Trolley, Joan, and I were awake. Then we would go and get breakfast.'

Giant Sun Trolley played the final slot, taking the crowd to gates of dawn, and chasing them out. The trio linked straight to the Free School. With anarchic fun, the Trolley developed 'Eternity in D', one note or chord played as long as possible until UFO was empty. The prankster in Barrett watched with perverse amusement as the last stragglers fled one D chord stretched to infinity and beyond. Drummer Glen Sweeney recalled, 'We went on at 3:00am and played two notes until 7:00am.' Syd incorporated this into his bag of tricks, much to despair of bandmates and audiences. The Trolley performed once with a hound onstage, who mournfully howled along with Tomlin on saxophone. Pink Floyd later did a similar experiment, 'Seamus', on their album *Meddle*.

Soft Machine opened and halfway through, Jimi Hendrix jumped onstage to jam. Hendrix stayed for Pink Floyd's set as well, soaking up Syd's style as he did with all the groups he was dashing from place to place to watch and jam with. The abstract, atonal coda on 'Third Stone from the Sun' attests to Syd Barrett's influence, not to mention Hendrix's Barrett-style *glissandi* on 'All Along the Watchtower'.

Hendrix had cut a demo for 'Third Stone from the Sun' four days before, though the version on his debut featured Barrett-esque *glissandi* and echo. Hendrix saw Pink Floyd at UFO several times, and gigged with them in a package tour around Britain.

Daevid Allen of Soft Machine said, 'We had a regular gig at UFO. Every Friday night a new world of multiple realities and expanding dimensions opened doors. The Magic Theatre of the Mind made manifest.

‘Our first UFO gig was memorable. A wild figure appeared in the corridor with the entire top of his head on fire. Arthur Brown plunged onto the stage declaiming in an operatic bottomless voice, “I am the god of hellfire!” Security men bearing fire extinguishers were pinned against the wall by laughing hippies as flames licked the low ceiling, for at UFO the show had to go on.’

Arthur Brown, an oracular force at UFO, had just returned from Paris, where he experienced a revelation: ‘I must shock.’ He began wearing makeup and rushing around out of his head. Found by Joe Boyd working as a freak attraction at some bizarre Soho club, Brown came to All Saints Hall shows and began cobbling together his stage show. He combined tremendous theatrics with a five-octave operatic voice that terrified audiences as he leapt from guttural growls to piercing shrieks.

The Crazy World of Arthur Brown began as an improvisational trio, with Drachen Theaker on drums and Vincent Crane on organ, and extended into song cycles concerned with the battle between good and evil, powered by the indefatigable Crane pounding staccato measures on his Hammond organ. Brown’s diabolical full-face makeup, shrieks, and untamed stage show, led the way for generations of horror-rockers from Alice Cooper to Slipknot.

Brown said of Pink Floyd, ‘We’re both based on audience involvement, but the Pink Floyd are impersonal and overpowering. We like to speak to, shock and attack the audience.’

Shock they did. Brown stage-dived into the audience, or insulted and baited them from the stage. The Exploding Galaxy experimental dance troupe performed with them, twirling around half-naked. Brown stalked the stage wearing metal masks, Arthurian robes or a loincloth. Although UFO is chiefly remembered as a hippy haven, combustible anarchy was never far from the surface.

At the Roundhouse, Pink Floyd played ‘Psychedelicamania’ – a New Year’s Eve rave. The Radiophonic Workshop performed between sets by the Who and the Move. Nick Jones of *Melody Maker* reported: ‘Despite freezing cold, large numbers of revellers turned up to watch the Move destroy two televisions and a car, the Who blow out the Roundhouse’s

pitiful electrical system twice and Pete Townshend destroyed his guitar and amps.'

Move manager Tony Secunda hired two strippers to disrupt the Who's set. The pair, on acid, danced topless, oblivious to the cold. Pink Floyd's performance was anticlimactic by comparison, though they outdid the Who in terms of volume, peaking at one hundred and twenty decibels. A reporter from the *Daily Mail*, armed with sound meter, reported on 'pop above the danger level':

'Teenagers celebrating the New Year at two psychedelic pop music sessions in London were risking permanent damage to the ears. The music and light were arranged to create the psychedelic sensations similar to those experienced by taking the drug LSD… Near the loudspeaker, where twenty to thirty young people were clustered in dazed immobility, the Pink Floyd group occasionally reached one hundred and twenty.'

The group took grim relish in breaking the sound barrier, as if by sheer volume they could overcome PA systems and indifferent audiences. They bragged to a reporter, 'We are proud to be the loudest group in England. Our act has now reached and gone beyond the point of pain.' With a jet airplane takeoff hovering around the one hundred and eight decibel mark, Pink Floyd were louder still.

Fan Mike Godwin recalled, 'The lightshow was gloopy oil wheels in red and blue. Illumination level was extremely low. The group were invisible apart from shadows cast on the wall against the lightshow. They played long, free-form numbers. The sound was deafening. Those old speaker cabs could be wound up to quite a level. They played "Pow R. Toc H." and "Interstellar Overdrive". During "Pow R. Toc H.", it passed midnight. Instead of the usual "ch ch" lyric they began chanting "Happy *New* Year" in a spectral way. Otherwise, next to no vocals.

'Rick Wright was picking full-of-Eastern-promise licks as Waters did the *ostinato* bit. The drums pounding a stoned Bo Diddley beat. I have no idea what Barrett was doing. In retrospect, he was using all kinds of tape loop effects and possibly playing some slide guitar too. They played for an hour-fifteen or so. Then the Who came on at 1:00am and I had to go home.'

In *Melody Maker*, Nick Jones observed: ‘The Pink Floyd have a promising sound, and some very groovy picture slides which attracted far more attention than the group, as they merge, blossom, burst, glow, divide and die.’

Words that well described the tumultuous year that lay ahead. Collectively, they navigated towards fame, fortune or disaster

‘Syd was a painter first and foremost but he always had a way with words and in this he was an artist too,’ asserts Jenny Spires. ‘He loved doing gigs. He was very sociable and played beautiful guitar too. He liked playing guitar and singing in bands. I don’t think he was interested in being a pop star at all, but it was all very exciting when it started to happen. Fame is one thing, but I don’t think he was prepared for what it meant.’

7. THE MACHINE

‘All movements are accomplished in six stages, and the seventh brings return. Thus the winter solstice, with which the decline of the year begins, comes in the seventh month after the summer solstice. So too sunrise comes in the seventh double hour after sunset. Seven is the number of the young light, and it arises when six, the number of the great darkness, is increased by one. In this way, the state of rest gives place to movement. In winter the life energy, symbolized by thunder, the Arousing, is still underground. Movement is just at its beginning.’

I Ching: Book of Changes
Chapter 24: Fû/Return – The Turning Point
Richard Wilhelm, translator, 1950

Thanks to Blackhill Enterprises, Pink Floyd started receiving significant mainstream media coverage. Jenner and King, for all their managerial inexperience, had an immediate knack for getting their boys into print. Music weekly spreads led to features in fashion and lifestyle magazines *Queen* and *Town*.

In London, Pink Floyd had built a cult following without releasing a single. On 5 January, at their Marquee mini-residency, Joe Boyd brought Chris Beard of underground jug band the Purple Gang to meet them in the tiny dressing room. As Syd wailed on ‘Astronomy Dominé’ Beard recalled the oil-wheel light show and the pilot lights on Binson units blinking in the dark. Under the candy-striped awning, they found mods stood stock-still in silence, getting their heads around this new music. *Record Mirror* reported: ‘Excellent and extremely exciting, but I couldn’t help thinking how dangerous this free-form thing could be in the hands of not such good musicians.’

The first British band to have an integral visual unit, Pink Floyd's underground following increased by bounds. The visuals often eclipsed Pink Floyd, blending sight and sound into a multimedia spectacle. Punters raved in the glowing lightshow, while journalists wrote enthusiastically from the sidelines, free publicity. Like Andy Warhol's Exploding Plastic Inevitable, their stage show met with irritation and awe out on the road.

Nik Cohn wrote in *Queen*: 'Thumping, crashing and guitar screeching all signified intensity and musical explosion… After twenty minutes, I left. The Pink Floyd at this stage are too cerebral by half. I would like to see them produce a better-balanced, more varied act. I would like to see them project a bit more sex.'

Pete Sears of mod band Les Fleur de Lys was stood at the back. He told *Terrascope*: 'This strange atmosphere with weird lights and surrealistic music swirling, with the first oil lightshow I'd ever seen. Willing to live dangerously and on the edge, the experience had profound effect. After seeing Pink Floyd, I became discontent with Les Fleur de Lys.'

Waters, ambitious to expand the scope of the band's shows, complained, 'We want complete audience participation. You just don't get it at the Marquee. Not just lights flashing on us but on the audience as well. We could get a theatre and all the proper equipment. We could go to pure abstraction with sound and light or complete illustration, pure evocation: like playing to a vase of flowers.'

Bands hustled to the venue a half-hour before show time with no sound checks, plugged into amplifiers with microphones going through the club's public-address system. Bands worked twice as hard to get half the impact, as PA systems constantly undermined them. Volume, at the expense of subtlety, became Pink Floyd's tool in saturating venues.

Syd now played though Selmer hundred-watt Stereomaster amplifier heads with saturated overdrive, and intense harmonic distortion. The pounding one-hundred-and-twenty-decibel impact aside, Barrett was shouting and not getting through, one reason the band improvised, rather than tackle set songs. Despite a thirst to become pop stars, their stubborn refusal to play three-minute songs was clear from the start. Pink Floyd

made no effort to ingratiate with onstage banter. Audiences had to accept the group on their own terms.

Peter Whitehead was hard at work on a film travelogue of Swinging London. With sixteen-millimetre Éclair camera, boom mike and Nagra tape recorder, his inspiration stemmed from Allen Ginsberg's poem 'Who Be Kind'.

'My inspirations were protest movements, life, and everything,' explains Whitehead. 'Everything was exciting; expanding and imploding in all directions.'

The film took on a life of its own, as all good works do. 'The film began as a documentary of Swinging London and instead focused on the underground. Hard to make two films at once but I tried. For me the underground was closer to my whole life. The wider scene I filmed tongue-in-cheek.' Aside from film and art icons Julie Christie, David Hockney and Michael Caine, Whitehead captured the psychedelic underground at UFO.

Whitehead's *Wholly Communion* boiled the momentous poetry-reading event to an incisive thirty-three-minute film. Impressed, Rolling Stones manager Andrew Loog Oldham offered Whitehead £2,000 to film the group's August 1965 Irish tour, resulting in *Charlie is My Darling*, the first rock-tour road documentary.

Working from Soho with Anthony Stern as assistant director and soundman, they filmed music videos, or 'pop promos', for Oldham's Immediate Records. At the Marquee, Whitehead filmed the first promo for the Jimi Hendrix Experience ('Hey Joe'), and followed the Rolling Stones to New York. His film for 'Have You Seen Your Mother, Baby, Standing in the Shadow?' saw the group in drag, with Brian Jones outstanding as a particularly slutty stewardess.

Whitehead shared a flat with Stern, who got a grant to film *San Francisco*, a fifteen-minute jump-cut collage, capturing the doomed momentum of Haight-Ashbury. Pink Floyd's October 1966 version of 'Interstellar Overdrive' served as soundtrack.

Whitehead recounted to documentary maker Paul Cronin that Stern said, 'Do you remember Syd Barrett and the boys?' Whitehead replied, 'Yeah, terrible music wafting through my door.'

‘No, no, they’re successful now, they’re playing in London,’ said Stern. ‘Let’s go and see them tomorrow, it’ll be great.’

The pair caught Pink Floyd at the Royal College of Art on a double bill with AMM. ‘So we went along. “Hey, I’m Peter Whitehead, I remember you.” I went to UFO and I liked them. Not connected to pop music, a long improvisatory quality, ideal for what I wanted. I persuaded them to go into a recording studio. I wanted “Interstellar Overdrive”, perfect music for my film.’ At UFO, Whitehead met Jenny Spires. ‘I had an affair with Jenny,’ he reveals, ‘still with Syd, though already out of touch.’ Jenny insisted that Whitehead film the band, and he offered them £85, an important boost to their paltry funds.

On 11 January, after a rare rehearsal, Pink Floyd drove to Sound Techniques Studio. Geoff Frost and John Wood, two brilliant engineers in their mid-twenties had launched the studio in frustration at the ‘twee and dull’ British facilities – acoustically dead rooms with zero spatial dynamics. In a converted dairy with high ceilings, the engineers installed a simple but efficient limiter, compressors and echo plate, with a self-built mixing desk.

Whitehead and Stern filmed as Joe Boyd and engineer John Wood worked the faders. On ‘Interstellar Overdrive’ Barrett played a Danelectro 3021 with curving black-and-white pick guard and rosewood fret board through a new silver Baby Binson unit. A cheap American Masonite guitar, the Danelectro shorthorn double-cutaway had a twanging ring and brittle bite from pick-ups inside metal lipstick tubes. The new Binson still accessed twelve echoes for complex multi-tap effects. It had shorter echo, sustained swell, hard slap-back echo and echo repeats. Notching up the input for overdrive, Syd gingerly adjusted the unit.

Whitehead says, ‘I agreed to pay for the session so I could have music for my film. I decided to run off a roll of film and ended using five seconds in the film! They did “Interstellar Overdrive” in one take and did not want to do it a second time. As I had booked and paid for two hours, they agreed to do an improvisation just for fun they called “Nick’s Boogie”, as Mason led the music from the start, mood especially. “Nick’s

Boogie" was a pure improvisation spontaneously, for me, to fill up time. I said I liked it so it was included in my contract.'

A rare glimpse into the Floyd's germinal music, this studio footage highlights the group chemistry. Syd sits on a stool, with his Danelectro and Baby Binson, Esquire propped along the wall like a silver axe, flanked by Rick Wright at Farfisa Combo-Compact Organ and Binson Echorec 2, and Waters and Mason on the right.

A fifth of whisky helped, they drank half during the recording. Barrett, for his part, got mightily stoned. Although the band's focal point, Barrett is deep inside his music, head bobbing in autistic rhythm. Mason, in purple turtleneck and pudding-bowl haircut, rode cymbals and kept time without fuss. Wright tweaked the Binson tone control for sharp, piercing tremolo notes far from the Farfisa in surf or garage rock. Playing clustered sustained chords in the lower register, with patent modal runs, Wright switched strings, flute and bass voice tabs with multi-tone booster on.

Pink Floyd's core sound stemmed from Wright as much as Barrett, often matching Syd note for sustained note. Jenner explained to author John Cavanagh: 'The Farfisa pedal notes and sustaining chords Rick used combined with echoes from Syd, who was much more sparkly.'

'Interstellar Overdrive' proved full of twists, subtle nuance, and order under illusory chaos. Mason and Waters locked into a driving one-chord groove while Wright played chords and arpeggios. At eight minutes in, they begin to meander, as Barrett and Wright head into the sonic ether, blasting into the firmament, Waters and Mason stay in the boiler room driving them on. Roger Waters's bass anchored the song, with blunt chords providing thumping drama. Waters tuned the E on his Rickenbacker down to D, giving his chords a punishing bottom end. When Barrett floated adrift in improvisational space, or Wright's aerodyne modes wandered, Waters constantly pulled them back.

Waters stood impassive, playing with marked intensity, though his composure slipped towards the end of the seventeen-minute take. Bending to tell Barrett to wind it up, they raced to a finish, with Waters's bass bringing leaden resolution; he throttled his instrument as though yanking a punt oar from river mud, an aggression essential to the band dynamic. Some recoiled, one Floyd associate says, 'That film session

was appalling. Roger was getting stars in his eyes, so it fell apart. Roger strangling his bass would have been performance rather than music making. Syd could be relaxed and uninhibited in a way none of the others could. To that extent, he was different. I don't remember seeing any of them moving in any situation, apart from Roger doing his funny thing, studied and not spirited.' Decades later, Waters admitted that he adopted a hard-man pose for fear of being exposed. At the time, his scowling left many cold.

For all their talk about how they improved as musicians in intervening decades, this was the raw Pink Floyd. Refined over the next few months, 'Interstellar Overdrive' emerged on the album in radically different form. Comparison with the tentative October 1966 version demonstrates the band's rapid progress, paring alternating melodic passages with clustered ambient noise into a sculpted whole.

Taking cues from Rowe, Barrett strove toward abstraction. He found that laying the guitar flat increased resonance. At high volume, Syd did not need to press strings for notes nor fret chords. Lightly touched strings vibrated in harmonic overtones. Altering tuning as he played, Barrett was fearless, leaping nimbly back as free-form improvisation reformed into final restatement. Sketching symbols across the fret board with his bevelled Zippo, Barrett painted in sound. Syd's effects processing veered toward the electronic experiments of John Cage. Save for Hendrix, no rock guitarist in London was doing anything remotely similar. 'I'd always credit Syd with the connection he made to his personal unconscious and collective, group conscious,' asserted Waters.

The band's improvisation on the Mason-led 'Nick's Boogie' turned Sound Techniques into a cathedral filled with echoes, extending AMM's spectral timbre into glacial minimalism. Switching to the Esquire, Barrett played with restraint, opening with his finest *glissando*, a sweep up the octaves with chiming metallic sonority, tapping strings to accentuate complementary harmonics. The sepulchral track is fascinating, not from any great technical musicianship (Nick Mason's star turn aside), rather for what Pink Floyd conjured from thin air. Mason learnt well from jazz drummer Chico Hamilton's propulsive touch. His delicate mallet fills place him as the least obtrusive drummer of the era. At the end of 'Nick's Boogie', Syd's head slumps as he rubs eyes in fatigue. In a relentless

push toward a tantalising peak that is forever just out of reach, Barrett was reaching overdrive.

On 13 January, 'The Return of the Dreaded UFO' welcomed back 'the monstrous Pink Floyd' to the psychedelic ballroom. Their van screeched to the kerb, and the quartet descended to the basement dancehall. Hypnotic light spun in tiny slivers from a rotating iron drum punctured with holes over the entrance. Hoppy said, 'Halfway down wide entrance stairs we put a snow machine, a theatre light producing the effect of falling snow. Stand in it for a minute or two and you began to be disoriented – same as driving a car into a snowstorm.'

Mick Farren's 1974 novel *The Tale of Willy's Rats,* long out of print, contains vivid images of UFO: 'At first sight the whole thing looked weird. A huge sign that read Blarney Club was disorientating until I found out for the rest of the week the place was run as an Irish immigrant dance hall. A wide flight of stairs with vestigial remains of thirties opulence led down off the street to the basement club. At the bottom of the stairs, some heavy-looking freaks took tickets. We paid, and went inside. You stepped through the door; the assault on your senses was so intense as to be almost physical. An overpowering smell of incense, swirl of lights, direct and from projections that floated across screens in various corners of the room.'

Lightshow operators inaugurated a 'Technicolor strobe', blasting the ballroom with pulsing electric lights. Syd drew a hand-painted sign for Nick's drum kit, which read 'Pink Floyd NOW'. Their moment had come. UFO became Pink Floyd's home ground, where they found fame. They played UFO seven times, becoming synonymous with the venue. 'You could describe us as the movement's house orchestra, we were one of the first to play what they wanted to hear,' explained Waters. 'Not difficult to convert the audience to this presentation. Beautiful to watch, it takes them right away. So different, impossible for us to play the same thing twice.'

In a forty-five-minute set, they played numbers that ran for an average of six minutes, leaving longer pieces to the second spot. 'Some last twelve minutes, but you cannot play on and on,' Waters asserted. 'We could improvise for an hour and a half but that's not on. For us the most

important thing is to be visual.' Unlike Waters, Barrett intended to improvise for an hour and a half if possible. Syd preferred abstract improvisations to set-lists, a marked disparity between his and Waters's approach.

Nick Jones and Chris Welch of *Melody Maker* stood transfixed under the bubbling lights. Welch walked around noting: 'A boy danced about playing maracas, a fat girl wandered about spreading love and happiness by smiling cheerfully. Nobody swore, nobody sneered, adopted threatening poses to bolster sagging egos.' Joe Boyd told them: 'UFO is home for groups doing experimental things in pop. The object of the club is to provide a place for experimental pop music, and for mixing media, lightshows and theatrical happenings. We also show New York avant-garde films.'

Hoppy and Moore screened *Cosmic Ray* by Bruce Conner, alongside films of female nudes, cartoons, and atomic bombs. Kenneth Anger's *Inauguration of the Pleasure Dome,* with soundtrack by Janáček, depicted neon mythical creatures in a pleasure dome. Like Anger's film, UFO was 'dungeon and celebration'.

'On a far wall a D.W. Griffiths epic ran silently with a group of freaks sitting watching it intently,' recalled Mick Farren. 'Others just lay in corners and against walls.'

American electronics whiz Jack Henry Moore stood behind the club's record player, amplifiers, lighting equipment and generator. As DJ, Moore often played a whole side of an LP, complete with gaps between tracks. Hoppy noted: 'This enabled conversations to happen without having to shout at one another.' With Love's eighteen-minute-long 'Revelation' from *Da Capo* on the turntable, the *IT* girl beauty contest packed up. Susie Gawler-Wright won and appeared on the cover of *IT* naked except for spidery body paint.

Four upright WEM speakers in each corner exaggerated the stereo image, and inspired Floyd's Azimuth Coordinator. Farren said, 'Continuous rock records, intercut with random sounds, disjointed conversation, and electronic music created the impression of John Cage let loose to run a discotheque.'

Juno Gemes directed multimedia performance works, experimental plays were performed, poets recited odes, and jugglers and acrobats performed. Music was a sideshow amid the hubbub. Like a Venetian Carnival, social distinctions blurred, with UFO groovers wearing their most inspired apparel and outrageous dress. The curious and confused among them, crowds sat on the floor, a new trend in London. Radiant women in gauzy dresses and long hair, many carrying flowers, drifted by like pre-Raphaelite maidens.

A strand of harder-edged nihilism matched the romanticism, with some wearing dresses made of reflective silver-backed plastic circles strung together. A 1930s gangster's moll look was also popular, with felt berets and twin sets in puce and magenta. Everywhere were long fringes and heavy makeup with false eyelashes on eyes drenched in exaggerated shadow. Gold painted fingernails and neon bangles adorned wrists as they whirled under showering lights. Men struck cool poses in satin shirts with mandarin collars, electrified Dylan/Hendrix hair and vibrant crushed velvets with flares. Illustrator Mike McInnerney hung about on the stairs doing sketches for macrobiotic teashop the Flying Dragon. McInnerney collaborated with Dudley Edwards from Binder, Edwards and Vaughn in OM Tentacle, amicable rivals to Hapshash.

'The audience milled around in constant procession, the weirdest people I'd ever seen,' Farren noted. 'The commercial flower-power thing hadn't struck then, a sprinkling of prototype kaftans and King's Road avant-garde I had on. Most were thrown back on their own resources and originality to create whatever effects they could by combining army surplus, India craft and their grandmother's wardrobe. A girl came past, naked to the waist, in blue jeans, with heavy breasts painted in amateurishly enthusiastic swirls of Day-Glo paint that burst into phosphorescent life every time she passed black light strips on the wall.'

Pete Townshend of the Who, on his third acid trip, realised he could not drive three hundred miles to a gig and went to see Pink Floyd instead. Townshend said, 'Syd Barrett was wonderful, and so were the rest of them. I fell in love with the group, and the club, especially Hoppy who ran the club and worked the door.'

At UFO, Irish Jack, ace face mod, recalled, 'Some geezer was leaning over me at the Coke bar. I could feel his body weight and turned around

to say, “What the fuck!” Pete bloody Townshend, in a big afghan coat, wearing a necklace. A real hippy. His next words mortified me, he said, “Jack, you’re still a mod!”’

Manfred, a heavy-bearded German drug dealer clad in caftan, gave away four hundred doses of ‘White Lightning’. Not LSD, but potent analogue DOM, synthesised to evade the law. Others felt new drugs being given away free in such quantity was suspicious. At five micrograms, DOM was a powerful psychedelic, at ten micrograms, problematic.

‘A guy with almost waist-length blonde hair and beard walked past in some kind of Middle Eastern robe that, apart from mirrored shades, made him look like the kind of Jesus figure so cherished by Victorian romantics,’ recounted Farren. ‘One of the key acid dealers, he took his religion very seriously.’

One ecstatic freak walked by with smouldering joss sticks, giving them out. A small concessionary corner at the back dispensed ‘UFOOD’; macrobiotic rice rissoles and vine leaves stuffed with brown rice. Craig Sams introduced the notion of organic foods to Britain at UFO, going on to build a wholefoods empire. Chris Rowley tended a small stand selling *International Times* and silk-screened psychedelic posters by Hapshash and the Coloured Coat through Osiris Vision, another underground start-up run by Joe Boyd. Industriousness was as remarkable as dope being smoked.

At UFO, everyone, in theory, was a participant at a perpetual happening. Elsewhere, John Pearce from Granny Takes a Trip and Michael Rainey from Hung on You took fittings for custom psychedelic clothes. Small groups sat talking. Some very young indeed. The more fearless danced, eyes closed, bobbing in oblivious bliss or blissful oblivion. A head shop in the corner sold what Miles termed, ‘…*strange* things! Little sparklers, sparking wheels, diffraction gradings.’ Not to forget Peter Wynne-Willson’s cosmonocles, with prisms welded into goggles for a lightshow all of one’s own. ‘If a time warp transported a man from the 14th century into this dark cave of light and sound, it would have fulfilled his expectations of hell,’ observed Farren. ‘But as I drifted around the bizarre throng I found it a paradise, crammed with seeds of so many ideas.’

There was constant traffic, as people edged past one another on stairs painted Day-Glo colours. Some went to catch a breather from the dungeon-like basement, where perspiration coiled down the walls. Others marched in a tinkling bell and caftan posse to Jack Bracelin's club, Happening 44, in Soho, where the Deviants and Soft Machine held sway alongside Fairport Convention. UFO members, admitted free, heaved and hoed until dawn. High priest of a London coven of witches, Bracelin's acid lightshow had a dark occult feel. Mick Farren called the club 'one of the weirdest hippy dungeons anywhere', where acidheads rubbed shoulders with Wiccan nudists, strippers on break, or Maltese gangsters.

'Hoppy and I ran UFO together, partners from the beginning,' explains Joe Boyd. 'My attitude was the same as it had always been. I was sympathetic to the socio-political mood but my real interest was in music. There was not a big philosophical divide, but Hoppy's interest in the club was atmosphere, spirit, political connection, and centre of the underground. One of few arguments we ever had was over the Social Deviants. Hoppy had gone to Middle Earth, seen this anarchic underground group, and thought they were great. We drove in a blizzard to the East End to hear them rehearse. They were terrible. I said, "They're going into the club over my dead body."'

'Hoppy felt they represented something we should encourage. An anarchic spirit of working-class kids from across the tracks. After so much pressure from Hoppy, we booked them at 5:00am. We always had a band on at 5:00am and paid them £5. Mick Farren always hung around the club, looking for something to do. Sometimes he'd be paid a couple of quid to work on the door.'

Farren soon inveigled his way into the role of front-door attendant. With a swagger straight from the seamier end of Ladbroke Grove, Farren cooled potential violence by turning away hard-case skinheads and mods. The scene was small and cosy. Mods at Oxford Street club Tiles were just cottoning on to the psychedelic basement up the road. A trendy club with coffee, a boutique, and excellent sound – Tiles was one-stop nightlife. Tiles' DJ, Jeff Dexter, ran all-nighters that witnessed speed- and alcohol-fuelled dancing to storming ravers like 'Boogaloo Party' by the Flamingos. Dexter first saw Pink Floyd at Spontaneous Underground, and soon began darting over to UFO on breaks.

‘When they re-opened as Tiles, they had taken better advice, and employed better people,’ recalls Dexter. ‘There was Tiles Street inside, with a record store, boutique, and a café, no alcohol. I played mainly R&B, as that was the best dance music, Atlantic, Tamla, Chess, Sue, and smattering of blue beat/ska, not much British mod. Some straight pop, if it was good to dance to.’

Boyd says, ‘I was standing at the door and this little mod kid in a three-piece suit with flares and big eyes ran down stairs and said he was DJ at Tiles, Jeff Dexter. Dexter thought the place was great and demanded I come back and visit his club. We went and he showed me around and offered me a black bomber [amphetamine pill].’

Jeff Dexter laughs, ‘Complete bollocks, although quite funny. We had met long before that with Jac Holzman. I had taken them to see the Move. Joe would not have seen me in a pair of flares either, now that’s where he adds insult to injury!’

When Dexter booked Pink Floyd at Tiles, the transition proved rough for soul fans and any last sharpies clinging to suits and flash miniskirts, gaping bemused at Pink Floyd. The music was far from the twelve-bar blues, for many their closest reference point. One black mod clasped his hands over his ears in pain.

Colin Turner was a young mod who frequented Tiles as Swinging London waned. His mates somehow or other got wind of strange goings-on up the road. Deciding to chance it and venture on up to UFO, Turner recalled, ‘As we approached the club we saw a long-haired guy dressed in only his underpants and strings of tiny bells. As though this wasn’t strange by itself, he was spinning around and around in the middle of the road. He and many others had taken a cocktail of LSD and speed.’ Turner and his mates were speechless as the wigged-out groover spun, with mirrored disc pasted to his forehead, eyes circling like Catherine wheels. Police from Tottenham Court Road station arrived and threw the hapless freak in a cell. Prepared to beat him senseless, the man’s blissful demeanour so unnerved them, not knowing what else to do, they frogmarched the acidhead back to UFO. ‘One of yours, then?’ police asked Mick Farren, at the door in his customary black leather jacket. ‘We’ll have ’im,’ Farren replied.

Turner and his mates stood outside, debating, chewing gum, tweaked on speed, in tailored three-button suits with side vents. ‘I remember thinking, should we go in? People milling around were very different to people I associated with. Certainly, they were friendly. Nothing ventured, nothing gained. So down a steep flight of steps we went.’ Farren took one look at their French haircuts, and sneered, ‘You can’t come in here, your hair’s too short.’ Colin and friends protested: ‘But you’re supposed to be all for freedom and things.’ Farren retorted, ‘Yeah, but we know your sort.’ The mods conferred, and then brandished a five-pound note, ‘How about a fiver?’ Farren thought for a split second, ‘Right, you’re in!’

Colin described the scene that greeted him: ‘Double doors on the left and into a new world! Noise from the crowd was deafening, incense overpowering, and the heat! A cold night but heat generated by sweaty bodies was awesome. Just about everyone was wearing tiny bells and either sitting staring into space (stoned) or prancing around (also stoned) or just plain stoned.’

The mods stood in an uptight phalanx, taking in the scene. Sensing trouble, Suzy Creamcheese, Hoppy’s consort and West Coast ambassador-to-London, gathered friends in diaphanous silks and crushed velvets and ‘love-bombed’ the mods with smiles, spun around them like dyads, got them to smoke dope. The mods relaxed and sat on the floor. Turner said, ‘In the early hours, in walked another group of long-haired musicians, all carrying their own equipment. Across the floor they walked, stepping up on to the stage. No curtains or wings, a plain stage three foot high.’

Farren said, ‘The focal point of UFO was a small stage, more suited to Irish jig bands than rock’n’roll. A screen was drawn across the front. An underground movie was being shown, but couldn’t disguise roadies going to and fro, and electronic grunts of amps being tested.’

Pip Carter stacked Selmer cabinets and plugged them into the rat’s nest of wiring behind the stage, poised to explode should another extension be attached. Wynne-Willson and Russell Page set up lighting on a scaffold overlooking the stage. Mixing inks, oils, water and chemicals, they projected through crepuscular darkness onto a canvas sheet running up the back of the small stage. Turner says, ‘The rudimentary lightshow consisted of a slide projector, with printer’s ink

placed between slides. As the ink heated it “popped”, projecting bubbles of colour on the group. A ripple went round the club [that] Pink Floyd were about to come on. The audience gravitated toward the stage, packing themselves cross-legged while those farther back stood and watched intently. Flashes of light illuminated the back of the screen, and then the movie was halted.’

Pink Floyd stepped onstage as the lightshow swirled above them, refracting through haze of smoke and heat. Turner recalls, ‘They started to tune up, playing some weird chords. “This could be good,” someone said. “Hello, we’re the Pink Floyd,” one of them said. And away they went.’

Farren wrote: ‘Without any announcement, a stagehand whipped back the curtain. This amazing roar hit us. Red and green lights flashed with nervous speed on the band, destroying and distorting features. They played unique music, which seemed to have taken Chuck Berry on a round trip through deep space and brought it back changed almost beyond recognition. Organ and feedback guitar soared and dipped like unfolding spiral nebula, while bass and drums reminded us the music was still rooted in rock’n’roll, even though intertwined with the pulse of a quasar.

‘Caught in the lights, Pink Floyd seemed aloof, remote, like sinister emissaries from a distant and powerful galactic empire. So far into their thing for a band without any records and with minority following, impressive. Their trip, with its coldness and austerity, had little to do with our band. Something about their cosmic roar fitted us well. In some half-formed way I could see myself riding it like a demented Silver Surfer screaming abuse at 20th-century civilization.’

Turner was unimpressed at first. ‘Although different, the music had a “jazzy” feel and I have never been a great lover of jazz. A strange combination of rock and jazz. As they went along, I realised this band had something. “Interstellar Overdrive” must have lasted forty minutes. Everyone around had the same thought: brilliant in parts, mainly boring. The Floyd were pounding away, when out of the doors came this whacking great balloon. Imagine a condom, four feet in circumference and half a mile long, inflated from within the club. A crowd pulled it out along Tottenham Court Road.’ Australian artist Jeffrey Shaw of the 26

Kingly Street group, an 'environmental co-operative', introduced inflatable art to the club.

'The Floyd's session lasted two hours, very long by other bands' standards,' adds Turner. 'One hour was considered good, two hours unheard of. They left the stage with little fuss, again carrying their own gear. They may have had just one roadie. I do remember them packing their own stuff. I had seen my first Pink Floyd gig. Unique, jazzy, boring and brilliant. I had to see them again. I saw them many times after, not love at first sight, but they certainly teased me into coming back for more.'

Peter Whitehead, John Esam and Anthony Stern arrived at the ICA on 16 January to shoot riveting film of Pink Floyd onstage under their lightshow, as young underground groovers whirled below. 'There was no future in it,' asserts Whitehead. 'An interesting passing phase, and appropriate for the UFO scene. One wanted long jazz-like music rather than aggressive pop. I liked the jazz feel because I never liked pop music.'

Suggestions of compositional complexity and echoes of Arnold Schönberg's astringent twelve-tones or John Coltrane's ecstatic dissonance caught the ear of classical promoter Christopher Hunt. Intrigued by descriptions from his secretary Sumi, Peter Jenner's wife, Hunt extended Pink Floyd an offer to play the Commonwealth Institute, Kensington. The institute, more commonly used for academic conferences or austere chamber music, was taken over on 17 January for 'Music in Colour: Pink Floyd'. Advertised under 'Opera Ballet and Concerts' in the *Times*, the band managed to be both 'serious music' and 'pop' simultaneously. 'I like what they do,' said Hunt. 'I usually just deal with classical chamber music but the Pink Floyd are something different. I have no interest at all in any other pop groups.'

During the interval, the band's All Saints Hall crony, artist John Latham, performed with giant paper puppets, and a sculpture of a 3-D representation of Pink Floyd's state of mind. Afterwards, Latham made plans for Pink Floyd to score his silent film *Speak*. The performance was followed by a discussion between band and audience, mostly art students like Syd.

In response to the growing buzz, Blackhill scouted for a booking agent to arrange gigs outside London. Knocking on the doors of Denmark Street in Soho, 'Tin Pan Alley', Jenner and King had no luck until they turned the corner to where the Bryan Morrison Agency were situated. By 21 January Morrison's firm were the Floyd's exclusive booking agents.

The agency booked groups on a ballroom circuit owned by shady music-biz professionals operating a hair's breadth from the criminal underworld. At Top Rank and Rikki Tik chains across Britain, fees were set by the performer's placing in the pop charts. A corrupt pantheon of seamy backhand pay-offs, gangster-run clubs, chart hyping, Denmark Street publishing rip-offs and bad deals from established record companies was seldom evident to outsiders. Once a band was on the fast track, the downside became clear. Rosemary said, 'I wish he hadn't got involved in the music world, because it's a rum old world that one.'

The switch from pop to rock spawned a monolithic music industry, riddled with formula and emboldened by spectacle. Canny Tin Pan Alley operators gave way to younger hustlers, every bit as unscrupulous, and ready to take on the psychedelic brigade. As Jimi Hendrix torched his guitar, manager Mike Jeffery stood in the wings stuffing the proceeds into a bag. Jeffery also managed Soft Machine, and told Mark Boyle he had spies out and decided that UFO was *extremely* successful.

Poorly scheduled, with supporting bands and audiences unfamiliar with their material, Pink Floyd soon found themselves on a crusade without much hope. In the provinces, university union clubs greeted them with enthusiasm, though opinion was divided. In mod ballrooms across the Midlands, Pink Floyd seemed little more than an accompaniment to a lightshow. Once the novelty wore off, audiences could not fathom a band whose music you could not dance to.

Pink Floyd showed up at, for example, Clifton Hall in Rotherham at 7:00pm. After two thirty-minute sets, the club owner counted up the take as they waited, shaking his head: 'I don't know why you boys won't do proper songs!' Total pay was £100, split six ways, after payout to lighting crew and road manager. Moreover, the band had to fork out ten percent to the agency and pay for petrol for the three hundred and twenty mile round trip on the M1 motorway, which was still being built. Routed off

the motorway by detours, they manoeuvred along dark country lanes, with June Child deciphering maps by torchlight as Rick Wright drove.

Bands in the insular London scene provided cues, competition, and spurred one another on. Music weeklies reported minute shifts in trends. At the newsstand outside Leicester Square tube station were *Melody Maker, New Musical Express, Disc & Music Echo, Record Mirror* and *Beat Instrumental. Rave, Fabulous* and *Jackie* catered to teenage female pop fans. Innovations ran in feedback loops among the Floyd and Traffic, Moody Blues and the Move.

Joe Boyd, slated to produce their debut, shopped demos to Polydor. 'I brought Alan Bates from Polydor to see Pink Floyd at Powis Gardens,' he recalls. 'He brought Polydor executives to another gig. Then we started drawing up a contract. I was going to be included as producer with the Polydor deal. At Polydor Studios, Pink Floyd used an empty studio as rehearsal room. Jenner and King retained the Bryan Morrison Agency as agents. Morrison, Steve O'Rourke and Tony Howard all came one night to see a rehearsal and we met.'

Descending on a band rehearsal on 22 January, the agents were experienced record-industry men, in sharp contrast to neophytes Jenner, King and Boyd. Boyd and the agents shared a mutual dislike from the get-go. The agents criticised the Polydor deal and told Boyd, managers and band they could get them a much better deal, for ten percent commission. They prevailed on Jenner and King to forgo Polydor altogether. They insisted on financing recording an independent single, which proved to be a wise strategy. Once other labels caught wind of Polydor's interest, Pink Floyd could use the single as bait. It was a step up from flogging demos.

'Next day, Jenner rang me to say Morrison felt he could get the group a better deal with EMI,' Boyd recounts. 'Within a short time, we were losing the Polydor deal. Morrison then said the best way to get the best deal was for the group to record a master of a single and take the finished recording to EMI. The group asked me if I would produce the single for them. As far as we knew, there was still no direct contact with EMI. I arranged for a session at Sound Techniques Studio. I had to get Bryan Morrison to guarantee the bill. An agreement stipulated I got a percentage of whatever the group got for the single. Then we did the

session.' Jenner stated that Morrison received all the publishing rights to the single in return.

By recording as independents, and selling to the highest bidder, the Pink Floyd camp stepped into high gear. Singles were not made from interstellar improvisations, though. At a three-minute mark to get radio airplay, 'Arnold Layne' proved their entree into pop. Those in the media with finely tuned cultural antennae on were quick to respond to Pink Floyd's growing reputation. On 27 January, director Jo Durden-Smith filmed the band at UFO for the popular TV show *Scene at 6.30*. Curious punters and academic types danced, among them Peter and Sumi Jenner, Joe Boyd and sundry *IT* staffers. Studied, intellectual London Free scholars gave way to a new freak contingent, younger and out for a good time. LSD was taken glibly by some newcomers. Older heads watched their anarchic energy with tolerant delight.

The gorgeous Karen Astley spiralled and pirouetted for cameras, an altogether more sparkling spectacle than a dancer in a miniskirt that Pete Townshend ruefully noted looked like a transparent cake wrapper. Dancers tripped around for a while in one place, casting arms akimbo and shaking their hair in a tarantella of ecstatic movements. Free-form 'loon dancing', light years from the Frug and Pony of mod ballrooms. 'Some danced in curious leaping motion that reminded me of ravers during the trad craze at college,' observed Farren. This dancing mania spread from UFO's dancefloor across London in psychological contagion. The groundswell tidal wave, powered by a chemical rush.

As Pink Floyd performed 'Interstellar Overdrive', Syd's hands blurred over the frets with fluid skill, vibrating in sheer concentration. Barrett loomed at the stage lip, eyes closed and wholly in the present, his Zippo and Esquire tools to reach transcendence.

The Pink Floyd flash across the screen in Sheldon and Diane Rochlin's ultra-underground film *Dope*. Syd channelled with vibrant force. Perched on the balls of his feet, guitar firmly in hand, he bounced from side to side dodging and feinting like a metaphysical boxer. Mason pounded pagan drums, like a handclapped football chant, with Waters pummelling through his clicking bass riff. Syd howled to a climax, while Wright played modal washes in the background. Their sound is extreme

even in the context of UFO and the sonic experimentation of the era, a clangorous mash-up of proto-metal and avant-garde gestures.

Wright's organ style became more fluid, an ideal counterpoint to Barrett's guitar. Wright became intuitive and agile, his strong sustained chords contrasting with flurried scales. Barrett's playing stood out among peers who six months previously were his models. Paul McCartney came to UFO and remarked to Miles that here was the synthesis of avant-garde and rock'n'roll they discussed. McCartney told sixties chronicler Jonathon Green: 'You'd go down UFO and see the early incarnation of the Floyd. They would be there, projections, people wandering about. A trippy adventure playground, Floyd up there, conjurer over here.'

McCartney, Clapton, Townshend, Hendrix all watched Syd at play. Jenny Spires says, 'Dressing room scenes at UFO were amazing, as Townsend, McCartney, Hendrix would just wander into the dressing room, but all so normal. UFO was a home from home.'

'This time I didn't use acid and I took Clapton to see Syd, who walked onstage – off his head on acid – played a single chord and made it last an hour using electronic echo,' recalled Townshend. 'Inspiring, anarchic and experimental.' Clapton told *Rolling Stone:* 'The Pink Floyd is one I like very much among live groups. Very strange group.'

Between sets, playwright David Zane Mairowitz staged a dramatic production, *The Flight of the Aerogenius* (or *Plight of the Erogenous*), as they shed clothing, illuminated by Jack Bracelin's Fiveacre lights. Then AMM played and Barrett watched, mesmerised by their improvisational freedom. Rowe sourced pop radio, with extended slow-motion *glissandi* from a plastic ruler grating across guitar strings. Discordant cello, shimmering cymbals and chiming bells created a crypt-like atmosphere. Cornelius Cardew dragged an amplified chair across the floor, Lou Gare honked on saxophone. They rubbed glass, drummed on a piano frame, drew a violin bow across a tape-recorder head. AMM's dynamics – soft to loud, simple to complex – put side-by-side stretches of near silence with clattering cacophony.

Still, Keith Rowe says AMM never felt kinship with either Soft Machine or Pink Floyd. 'I am not sure why, more of an "us and them", all the pop-rock musicians. What they wanted and we wanted was different. We set out with the agenda of developing music that had not

existed before, and techniques. From the early days, the agenda was not to become rich and famous. At the art school I went to ultimate success was to become middle-aged and obscure. Hanging out was not part of AMM's scene. Getting gigs at any price, being popular or understood, was not our agenda, to this day. Being marginal and unappreciated was seen as a positive thing. When you're so close to it, and up to your eyes in it, you don't know. Those obvious things are too close for you to see.' AMM percussionist Eddie Prévost told Nick Jones: 'Pink Floyd was just another band trying to make it. AMM was an improvising band making strange noises.'

Norman Smith joined EMI in 1959 as engineer, after a career in jazz did not pan out. In long apprenticeship going back to Johnny Kidd and the Pirates, Smith recorded the Beatles' audition at EMI. He went on to engineer two hundred Beatles songs, adept at arduous editing between takes on four-track mix downs. Learning his craft under producer George Martin, Smith engineered all the Beatles' albums through to *Rubber Soul*. When Martin left to go independent, Smith replaced him as head of EMI label Parlophone and graduated to producer.

Bryan Morrison rang Smith and asked, 'Have you heard of a group called Pink Floyd? They're up and coming. They haven't got a contract but they're interested in you coming to see them.' Smith went with Morrison to UFO on 27 January. 'What I saw amazed me. I was into creating and developing new electronic sounds in the control room and Pink Floyd, I could see, was into the same thing, a perfect marriage.' Though impressed with their raw appeal, Smith was underwhelmed with the Floyd's music. Convinced he could fashion them into his version of the Beatles, he set about wooing them. Familiar with jazz and pop, Smith admitted to *Guitar World* editor Alan di Perna: 'Their music didn't mean much to me at all. They had this lightshow, impressive. I remember thinking, "How can I get a lightshow onto disc?" I could see the following they had, extremely popular. I thought, "Well it looks as though we can sell some records here."'

Smith invited the group and management to his office at EMI. The exchange was polite, if wary. On the Floyd's side, there were apprehensions an EMI producer might turn their music into something

unrecognisable. For his part, Smith was nervous, knowing nothing about psychedelia. ‘I was terrified!’ Smith confided to disc jockey Nicky Horne. ‘I was nervous about meeting these guys because they had made a name without, strangely enough, a hit record. They were doing something different even though I’d been used to the Beatles. I was looking for a group I could make my name as producer. I was impressed with the charisma of them. I had to get them to EMI, to sign them. I recognised here was going to be something. The difficulty of recording [and] producing this group was there.’

When Jenner and King told Smith they wanted £5,000 before signing, Smith was alarmed, telling them, ‘I think this might be a problem!’ EMI never paid front money.

Mike Leonard came to UFO, observing from a reasonable distance along the back wall. Impressed, Leonard notes, that ‘at UFO their reputation was built. Pink Floyd became icons of the alternative society.’ Not everyone shared his enthusiasm. Critic Nik Cohn cringed: ‘They played instrumentals, twenty-five-minute scream-ups, formless and tuneless and colourless but always incredibly loud. Into electronics, free form and all sorts: very solemn, most artistic. For me, boring almost beyond belief. As it happened, buried under all the crap, was a good lead singer/writer, Syd Barrett.’

‘UFO was a blank room,’ says Peter Wynne-Willson, ‘the stage was on a side wall rather than end wall. A good effect, a much softer set-up. The stage was raised and in the middle of the room. Even though a show band stage, I cannot imagine how they got a show band on to that tiny stage. When the focus was on the stage, without house lights up, UFO was a cosy environment. You would not think so if you went into Blarney Pub in daylight. UFO was long, and not wide, a squash with a few hundred people. UFO fell into different areas. A bar arrangement at the Tottenham Court Road end, a little dressing room beyond the stage and then an L-shaped bit where Mark Boyle often did lights. UFO was an unremarkable room, but a terrific atmosphere was created.’

In well-synchronised kinetic display, Wynne-Willson and John Marsh brought the lightshow brigade up to speed. Marsh sliced and diced condoms and stretched them across gel lights, making merry with striated patterns. Cut flat, placed between sheets of Polaroid film and stretched,

stress patterns in semi-transparent rubber projected onstage. ‘A beautiful effect,’ Marsh recalled

Across the infinite dimensions suggested by LSD, coupled to lightshows of dissolving chemicals skittering across acetate under heat, an all-encompassing experience was complete. The kinaesthetic staging stirred visions of astral travel, and mirrored the airless shift of nebulae. Barrett stated that lights were a conduit for music, stressing synaesthetic interaction, and arguing concrete intent. ‘We use lights to get audiences used to the music we play. It’s hard to get used to because it’s a new music. Because it is a new music, we realise that it takes a lot more time to get used to it. The crazy lights help, I think. Anyway, I like looking at them.’ *Town* magazine stated: ‘Projected slides bathed musicians and audience in hypnotic and frenzied patterns of liquid-coloured lights. Honeycombs, galaxies and throbbing cells whirl around the group with accelerating abandon as the music develops.’

Mason felt that ‘the trouble with projected slides is everybody tends to ignore the music. To us the sound is at least as important as the visual aspect.’ Still, Pink Floyd grew to relish the anonymity liquid lights offered. Often the group were invisible under clouds of projected liquid ink, their instruments blending into the indistinct background. Wright noted, ‘From the earliest days, when oil slides projected onto the group hid us, we were always faceless musicians. That idea developed. Even in UFO days [audiences] came for the experience, lights plus music. We were happy not to be in the limelight.’

‘Unusual for any lightshow to be touring with a specific band, as opposed to at a venue, after a while I knew the music well,’ says Wynne-Willson. ‘I knew the group musically well, not that I’m any musician. When it was good, a terrific experience to be doing lighting with such interesting music, and developing with the music. Technical aspects, apart from controls I’d made, were extremely sensitive and extremely short travel. Light bulbs and lanterns were on one mains voltage, relatively low wattage, so reaction time was rapid. The thicker the wire in a filament, the slower to come to temperature. If low voltage, big and if high wattage, thin. For these days, absurdly low wattage. They did react fast, and control was extremely sensitive. Though not like having a

lighting rig, they were efficient lanterns, set close to the group. A real rush to do.'

The core of the Pink Floyd lightshow was liquid slides and flashing lanterns. Building on the bare bones rig set up by Joe Gannon and Jenner, Wynne-Willson's stagecraft made the lighting evermore dramatic. He set main lanterns at the foot of the stage, as close as possible to Pink Floyd's feet, casting spectral shadows on the backdrop. Alternating with switches, Peter flashed lanterns in sequence, creating rippling stroboscopic shadows. Slowing patterns, shadows scaled or fell on the backdrop. All done by hand, without electronics – part of UFO's magic.

'The base of slides we made used water-based inks,' explains Wynne-Willson. 'We would use a whole slew of different chemicals and powders. Various actions took place in a given slide. Bubbles occluded in liquid rose and fell on the screen. Chemical reactions occurred between different liquids in the slide. Different colours and chemicals reacted at different speeds from projector heat. We sped things or slowed them using a hairdryer on "hot" or "cold", or a gas torch. Projectors were thousand-watt main voltage projectors, quite an item them, fragile and hot. We leant over them to mess with slides, a hot business somewhere like UFO, with a low ceiling and packed out, but that came with the territory.'

In a meeting of technical and intuitive minds, tech-heads like Boyle and Wynne-Willson merged chemistry and stagecraft. Jack Henry Moore brought knowledge of sound engineering, video and electronics. Dermot Harvey (who Miles called 'an errant biochemist, discoverer of many immiscible liquids') projected three-dimensional liquid projections onto helium-filled balloons, forever drifting toward ceiling fans or lights.

Barrett was sympathetic to the developing modes of multimedia. He shared with his peer group an attraction to unusual and revolutionary thoughts, ideas and lifestyles. Syd delighted in communications, underground media, electronics, and gadgetry. In *IT*, a cut-up generator included with one issue showed Barrett to be well in tune with the underground currents.

Guitarist Steve Howe of Tomorrow (later of Yes, and formerly of the Joe Meek-produced Syndicats) remarked, 'You were pounded with sound and images. A massed wall of bubbling, oozing oil chopped up with

movie clips – an upside-down Laurel and Hardy or some sensuous cartoon – a film of triangle changing into a square and then a circle. All psyching you out. The idea was the mind would not be able to think straight.

'Psychedelic music brought it all in. All the young guitarists and musicians felt they could play long improvised solos. Improvisation was expanding the whole idea of what a song had been. [With] the change from single to the album, more people tried to get out the rut of a song that repeated first strain and then middle eight and then first eight again. Much warmer, where people could improvise much more freely.'

This improvisational ethic was innate in Barrett, an extension of his belief in unfettered freedom. A restless improviser, Syd never played a song the same way twice, and loathed formats. His restlessness often saw exquisite variations on a theme – at times these proved difficult for the group to follow. Barrett began in one tempo or key, and suddenly wrenched gears in violent shift toward somewhere else altogether. Being sure-footed, Syd could jump back in when Mason and Waters were about to lose the beat. Barrett was a rhythm player who could insert melodic fills when needed and stretch out when not, like jazz performers. Syd's time playing bass in Those Without imbued him with rhythmic rigour.

UFO captured the *zeitgeist* and took off – a bubbling caldron of music, clothes and beliefs. 'Their shows were always packed,' noted Jenny Fabian. 'Underground groups were suddenly commercial, and straight industry people were moving into our scene and exploiting it. Imitators changed equipment, got lightshows, and followed where the Pink Floyd led.'

The psychedelic dawn had arrived. Many were caught unaware. Some exchanged mod suits for bells and caftans, switching from one fashion to the other. The buzz at UFO extended from person-to-person, as members took back breathless accounts to flatmates and friends across London. The original psychedelic cadre at UFO came from Bayswater and Notting Hill rather than Chelsea, though new faces arrived in droves. The club grew at such a spectacular rate that Boyd and Hoppy closed the membership and looked for larger premises. Boyd lamented, 'We are getting a lot more observers rather than people who participate.'

Jenny Fabian remembers the sudden influx. ‘The new punters were all right; no problem, the more the merrier. They weren’t tourists on the scene. Those we called “plastic hippies” and “weekend hippies”, looking back, poor things, had nine-to-five jobs and enjoyed the environment. There must have been ordinary people who liked the music. It couldn’t have been just those who took acid.’

‘The Move played at UFO,’ says Miles, ‘and the crowd didn’t like them at all. The Move was much too aggressive. They smashed television sets. There was booing, the first time I ever heard booing there. UFO was a fickle audience, and they saw the Move as terribly commercial. Tomorrow was just as commercial, though. They began as the In-Crowd, a typical Denmark Street pop band. Only adding Twink made them a psychedelic band.’

John ‘Twink’ Alder was a livewire drummer with a freaked-out white-boy afro, making the scene in Chelsea and hanging out with the owners of Granny Takes a Trip. Twink recalled, ‘UFO wasn’t big but it had great atmosphere, fantastic. As soon as I saw it, I wanted the group to play there and it affected me immediately. I started to get new ideas – things like mime, more free-form playing, and using lightshows. The first time I went to UFO the Floyd were playing. I cannot say I remember them as being fantastically good but I appreciated what they were doing. I knew it was “new” and experimental and I have always been looking for new things and I latched on it was raw and unstructured cosmic jamming.’

One album that captured the spirit of UFO was *Hapshash and the Coloured Coat featuring The Human Host and the Heavy Metal Kids* (which featured the first use of the phrase ‘heavy metal’ in music). Waymouth and English joined with Guy Stevens, former DJ at the Scene, to record an album’s worth of freak-outs. Michael English says, ‘Guy Stevens was Island Records’ chief producer, who produced “Whiter Shade of Pale”. Chris Blackwell, head of Island, would not make the Hapshash record in red vinyl so we took the masters to Liberty. The chief influence was John Cage.’

Hapshash’s free-form communal jamming drew from Eastern culture for quasi-religious inspiration, filtered through psychedelics. Rolling Stone Brian Jones was on hand, alongside freaks of varying proficiency

and sobriety, some who ended up in asylums, while others wound up in Spooky Tooth. (Jenny Spires says, ‘The session was a free for all.’)

The first cut, ‘H-O-P-P-Why?’ sees the entourage jangling along with clanging gongs as the hushed vocals spell out the nickname of John Hopkins, the early English psychedelic dropout and underground pioneer. The fifteen-minute ‘Empires of the Sun’ was an electric eclipse of mumbled mantras, orgiastic bells, and whistles, sat atop a pounding tribal beat. The tribal chanting was an expression of underground communal spirit they felt had been lost in modern culture. Beyond the Romantic era’s denial of the industrial revolution, the psychedelic underground looked back to tribal societies. Krautrockers Can and Amon Düül later cited the album as a central influence.

January was a month of UFO gigs, a smattering of other shows, and sessions for Whitehead’s film. The first week of February, pop magazines aimed at teenage girls, *Fabulous* and *Jackie*, sent photographers. Later that month came a string of out-of-town gigs, and the band’s first EMI recording sessions. Initially, the quartet found it all very exciting, travelling all over England, speeding to university gigs in the van.

‘Freedom is what I’m after,’ stated Barrett unequivocally to *Disc & Music Echo*. ‘That’s why I like working in this group. There is such freedom artistically.’

This freedom hinged on Barrett driving his creativity forward through sheer force of will. Pink Floyd forged into wide-open territory with radical music. As fearless as Dan Dare, Syd pressed onward into uncharted regions, pulling the group in his wake. Waters said, ‘We’re playing something different from what has gone before. Like jazz musicians, we improvise all the time, vocally and instrumentally.’

‘The musical content of psychedelia comes from trying to do a simpler form of jazz,’ posits Pete Brown. ‘A jumping scene in 1967, with the psychedelic scene happening at places like UFO, Middle Earth and Happening 44. Then the Little Theatre Club and the old Ronnie Scott’s, where younger musicians played experimental jazz. Interesting going from one to the other. Syd Barrett, and people inspired by Syd, were trying to do a form of jazz, without so many chords and different structures… Syd, apart from writing songs, as a player, had more

knowledge than the others did. Within his limitations, he could improvise and be inspired in the same way a jazz musician could be inspired. That's what he was trying to do, beyond what the rhythm section could do, to be brutally honest. Whether drug-driven or not, whenever I saw Syd playing, he always seemed on a high-level of inspiration. His stage act at UFO was wild.'

'Syd had a job playing in bands in Cambridge,' adds Brown 'suggesting larger knowledge of music, even in a limited way, than the others [had]. He was not coming from a British amateur point of view, as the others were. That fits well with my image of what he could do. Even with that small degree of competence, he had more knowledge of chords and chord changes. It suggests he had some old-fashioned musical ability, and could even read music to a point. This makes what he did all the more remarkable.'

Brown continues, 'I've never rated Pink Floyd as musicians. I never thought they had much to say musically. The rhythm section could not compare with competitors Soft Machine and Dantalian's Chariot, who had it and were great. Compared to them, the Floyd did not play well, except for Syd. His time was very good. Syd was the one holding it down. I'm not sure how much support he had.' Duggie Fields agrees, 'I never thought they had any rhythm, the least appealing part of them.'

Nonetheless, the others built a leaden base that Syd transformed into gold; architecture students laying foundations for Barrett's baroque flourishes. Soft Machine were easily the better band in technical terms, but Pink Floyd had dark theatre entwined in their music. Barrett had charisma, Waters his aggressive style. Soft Machine's forays into pop came to naught. Their failed single 'Love Makes Sweet Music' proved they had little pop appeal.

'British rock rhythm sections always had funny time,' observes Brown. 'They don't anymore. It gets sorted out in the studio. Live they still can't do it. Right from the start of the Liverpool scene, those who had no musical training and jumped right into it all had funny time. Even on records. Even on Pink Floyd records. Rock, except for people coming from jazz, is about people working within limitations. Syd was listening to Indian stuff, which has improvising on one chord and drones. People of that generation listened to Indian music, jazz, and blues.

‘There was the trance element as well. Trance has roots not only in psychedelia but also in dub reggae. Improvising on one chord, if you are out of your mind, is easier not to think about chord changes. Like Jamaican musicians getting into a heavy *ganja* groove and staying in one or two chords for a hell of a long time. Comfortable, you can get off on it – the longer you stay inside it, the better you feel. Syd was creating grooves in his own mind rather than working off anything the others were creating. The others could play simple things.’

‘The Master Musicians of Jajouka, Morocco have much in common with sixties live music,’ points out bassist Jack Monck, who later played with Barrett in Stars. ‘Music held together by improvisation, but unlike jazz not based around a theme. Repetitive improvisation where layers and textures evolved, modulating in rhythmic rather than harmonic way.’

‘Everything was so rosy at UFO,’ asserted Syd. ‘It was really nice to go there after slogging around pubs and so on. Everyone had their own thing. It’s been interesting to see things turning out the way they have.’ Barrett’s painting had fallen by the wayside. Painting could not ‘transcend the feeling of playing at UFO and those sort of places with the lights and that the group was getting bigger and bigger’.

UFO was the source of progressive music, as the loose genre came to be known. In time, excess pomp and self-indulgence would spoil prog, though at UFO promising seeds sprouted. Category shattering mixed media combined theatrics, light and sound, drugs, and an inclusive network that made UFO the source of manifold permutations. Fairport Convention’s folk-rock and Giant Sun Trolley’s Eastern jazz jams dissolved and coalesced in a Pandora’s Box of musical innovation. Tyrannosaurus Rex, Pink Floyd, Arthur Brown and Soft Machine all sprang from UFO. Barrett said in 1970, ‘What happened at UFO when we started was a microcosm of what happened later.’

Proto-Jethro Tull group John Evan Smash played support to the Floyd in Ainsdale. Ian Anderson watched riveted from sidelines, rapt at his first exposure to psychedelia. ‘Genuinely amazing, it wasn’t their songs as much as the way they broke all musical and presentational barriers. I never did any drugs, so I wasn’t interested in the psychedelic aspect of what they were doing. The way they mixed rock, folk, and Eastern influences was fascinating, very eclectic.’

Pink Floyd returned to Sound Techniques on 29 January. From a six-song solo acoustic demo Barrett had recorded, they chose two: ‘Arnold Layne’ and ‘Let’s Roll Another One’. Over three days, Joe Boyd produced and John Wood engineered – the production team behind Nick Drake, Incredible String Band and Fairport Convention.

Waters said, ‘Syd was writing quite a lot of songs. Joe Boyd heard them and we got together some bread, went into Sound Techniques and recorded. John Wood engineered it all very well and out of it came our first single “Arnold Layne”.’

Pete Brown felt that British producers were ill equipped to adapt to rapid changes in pop music. ‘“Arnold Layne” was pretty hip, produced by Joe Boyd. Then they had a terrible EMI hack, a dance band musician, in as producer,’ he recounts. ‘Things were happening in music. British producers had not caught up yet. You’d had great British producers, like Joe Meek. Producers were stuck in their own era and their own sound. It took a while before they caught up.’

Unusually for Barrett, the music to ‘Arnold Layne’ came to him first, followed by the lyrics. Rosemary observed, ‘Lyrics such as “Arnold Layne” – a little bit risqué and not quite so nice – were a surprise to me as it wasn’t his way and he never went back to it.’

In a restrained rhyme scheme, Barrett issued dispatches from Arnold’s world. Syllabic variants gave brevity an edge, matching consonants for consonance, brought to bear in a downbeat lyric hitched to triumphal verses. With the A G D E chord movement descended from ‘The Night Before’ by the Beatles. Barrett’s *glissandi* swooped from G# to A in the verses, with a fast slide up, then a repeat of the A chord in a zooming, vertical lurch. Barrett drones, accompanied on A, moving to G-natural, giving the song a raga-meets-British-folk twist.

The bulk of ‘Arnold Layne’ was laid down in six hours. Boyd and Woods plugged Wright and Waters into the board, patching Waters’s Rickenbacker 4001S on one line and Wright’s Farfisa through the Binson into another. They mixed the rhythm section to one track on four-track tape, with guitar and Farfisa bumped to another track, then guitar solo and vocals added. Overdubs of Wright’s organ solo and Mason’s drum

repeats were scattered over two more days, but the single was recorded with minimal fuss.

The B-side, ‘Candy and a Currant Bun’, was dispatched with similar speed. Still, three sessions to record a single was considered lengthy, at a time when albums were cut in as many days. Four-track recording required instant decisions. Boyd and Woods had to get microphone placement, equalisation and balance right with little margin for error. Woods set Mason in the centre of the room, beneath the high-ceilinged apex, with the group around him.

‘We didn’t spend much time on Syd’s vocals. We put a Neumann U67 in front of him. He was great to work with,’ Woods told writer Jeff Touzeau. Barrett played, and then wandered outside for a smoke or cheese sandwich. Little interested in playbacks or scrutinising the mix, Barrett preferred abstractions – details he left to others. Syd was content to let people besides himself fill in outlines he dashed off with Zen authority, pointing at the heart of the song. Boyd notes, ‘When I talked or dealt with the group, I dealt with Roger rather than Syd… Everybody looked up to Syd and acknowledged he’d written the songs. The lead singer, the lead guitar player – but diffident in that he didn’t insert himself in the discussions. Waters would say, “Okay, we’re going to do this,” but everyone looked at Syd, who would say, “Yeah, that’s cool.”’

What interested Barrett was miking his amp. After some discussion they put a microphone in back of his Selmer Treble ’n Bass 50 Mk II amplifier, for a well-rounded bottom end and sparkling highs. Boyd recalled, ‘Syd was on top of his gadgets. He explained how all this stuff worked to us.’ Electronics aside, Boyd also asserts that ‘the Pink Floyd did not have thorough knowledge of avant-garde composers Karlheinz Stockhausen or John Cage. Barrett did not strike me as someone who studied things much. Though astute, Syd was a spontaneous character, not a scholastic person. Syd had a real glint in his eye, a sparkle, a real joyous energy about him.’

‘I wouldn’t have said there was a wide gulf between Syd and the others,’ muses Wynne-Willson. ‘All nice middle-class boys, well, middle-class boys at any rate. Syd seemed younger than the others did, though attitude more than age.’

Impressed with Barrett's solo demo, Boyd says, 'After the session I discussed with Peter Jenner doing a solo record with Syd, though nothing came of it.' Searching for a follow-up to jug band and underground group Purple Gang's epochal 'Granny Takes a Trip' single (featuring Hoppy on tack piano), Boyd asked Syd for a copy of his tunes, including the jaunty dancehall shuffle 'Here I Go'. 'I sat next to him in the winter of 1966 in his manager's flat as he sang song after song,' Boyd revealed, 'explaining the group couldn't use them all and maybe I knew someone else who would like to record them? All appear on the solo albums.'

Chris Beard of the Purple Gang recalls, 'Syd told Joe Boyd "they can have Number Two and we'll have Number One" after hearing "Granny Takes a Trip" the night after we had been in.' The Purple Gang listened to a playback of 'Arnold Layne'. Beard shakes his head, speechless at the song and its production. 'I'll never forget hearing "Arnold Layne" coming out of those speakers.' Boyd and Wood demonstrated why they are regarded as among the finest one-two producer-engineer combinations to work the boards in Britain.

Two nights later, Pink Floyd returned to record the B-side of the proposed single. 'Let's Roll Another One' was an unsubtle ode to the joys of smoking dope that dated back to stoned summers in Cambridge and Those Without. Stoned, with the munchies, Barrett airily commands his girlfriend to dart across the Mill Pond and get him candy and a currant bun. Syd was instructed to make the song palatable to major labels. 'We had to change all the lyrics,' said Waters, 'because it was about rolling joints. It was called "Let's Roll Another One" and we had to change the title to "Candy and a Currant Bun".'

Vexed, Syd dubbed a new vocal with amended words, the first of many compromises. This being Syd, and this being England, 'Candy' has Syd turning *down* sex, an effete touch of disdain matched with Johnny Kidd and the Pirates' 'Please Don't Touch'. Both 'Arnold Layne' and 'Candy and a Currant Bun' belong more to the subgenre dubbed 'freak beat' than to psychedelia proper, along with John's Children's 'Desdemona', and the Creation's 'Making Time', last holdovers of the 'kinky' aesthetic that crept into pop culture in 1966. (Christopher Booker noted in *The Neophiliacs*, his study of sixties Britain, that a sudden vogue arose for anything kinky, sadistic, voyeuristic or relating to drugs.)

Disguised or not, ‘Candy and a Currant Bun’ was a drug song, written at a time when a joint could land one in prison. Songs advocating drugs were considered daring, and connected one to the scene. Like Toad in *The Wind in the Willows*, Syd was being a playful rapscallion. He aimed for the charts. The song contains sharp guitar effects, boiling down its influences. From the Howlin’ Wolf/Hubert Sumlin ‘Smokestack Lightning’ filtered through the Yardbirds/Eric Clapton, Syd borrows the one-riff-and-no-chord-changes relentless blues classic, and takes Sumlin’s percussive snap to an extreme. He assimilates the rave-up in the Yardbirds’ ‘Happenings Ten Years Time Ago’, and the Byrds’ ‘Eight Miles High’, from which Barrett adapted the final ascending riff.

Wright’s organ grinds on sustained chords supplied Barrett with modulating pedal shift for his guitar fancies. Mason played shimmering cymbal splashes and double bass patterns. Waters augmented the sense of menace with a droning one-chord bass line below the choruses, anchoring Barrett’s blithe musings on sex, drugs, ice cream and currant buns. The Pink Floyd pop sound was complete. With mixing finished on 1 February, they shopped the single to EMI.

Mason told teenybopper magazine *Rave*: ‘We didn’t want “Arnold Layne” to be our first single. We were asked to record six numbers and pick the best two, then find a recording company to accept them. We recorded the first two, they were snatched away, and we were told, “That’s it.”

‘All the record companies wanted the disc, so just a case of holding out for the biggest offer. By the time “Arnold Layne” was released, we had progressed and changed our ideas about what a good hit record should be. We tried to stop it being released but we couldn’t.’

Norman Smith’s role in the Pink Floyd saga is underplayed, for he produced remarkable recordings. By his own admission, Smith sought to strike the mid-point between the band’s live sound and Syd’s songs. Joe Boyd was dumped, as EMI forbade outside producers. Boyd’s percentage on ‘Arnold Layne’ went unpaid for decades. He dryly notes, ‘It took a long while before I got the percentage, but I’m on the EMI computer.’

That same day, Pink Floyd turned professional. Waters, Mason and Barrett left school. ‘None of us had any job before the Floyd started. We’ve all come straight from college,’ said Mason. For the quintessential

student band, working from blues covers to psychedelic freak-outs, going professional meant becoming public property. Not until the process of fame gathered momentum did Barrett realise he had signed away his freedom.

Less welcome attention came on 29 January, when Sunday paper the *News of the World* launched an attack on the underground. A three-part exposé entitled – with the economy of words common to hysteria – 'Drugs & Pop Stars – Facts That Will Shock You' singled out Donovan for attack, through the confessions of Maggie, an ex-girlfriend of his cohort Gypsy Dave, who spoke airily of acid experiments. The paper recounted a session of snooping around Indica. 'Browsing through shelves was like a glimpse of a madhouse. Rows and rows of cheaply printed books of weird poetry about erotic fantasies, all of which had close links with LSD. Posters on walls invited customers to "all-night trips" and Indian music is played in the background, an accepted part of many organised LSD experiences.'

Under the banner headline 'Pop Stars and the Cult of LSD', the *News of the World* stirred outrage with xenophobia. 'Like so many sophisticated evils, the LSD craze began in America. Amongst the most active British groups advocating LSD are some members of the London Free School, which comprises about two hundred people.' Also attacked was *IT*, whose 'editorial matter praises drugs and drug takers'. The Floyd were lambasted in the article: 'The Pink Floyd group specialise in "psychedelic music", which is meant to illustrate LSD experiences.' Fearful of jeopardising the EMI deal, Blackhill fired off a press release stating their charges knew nothing of psychedelics. The tabloid issued a grudging retraction two weeks later, buried on the back page.

The article sparked a systematic witch-hunt by Detective Sergeant Norman Pilcher, head of New Scotland Yard's Drugs Squad. Later charged, convicted, and sentenced to four years in prison for planting drugs as evidence, Pilcher and his notorious 'hash-hounds' waged a campaign aimed at bringing down rock stars. Since 1966, underground figures like John Esam, Russell Page, Hoppy, Stash de Rola and others had already been arrested.

Spoiling for a fight, the tabloids and police were handed a golden opportunity when Rolling Stone Mick Jagger sued the *News of the World* for libel. The scandal sheet had confused Jagger with Brian Jones in their exposé, where Jones brandished a block of hash at two women at the Scotch of St James and suggested they go round to his place for a smoke.

On 12 February, the Drugs Squad swooped on Keith Richards's rural cottage at Redlands, arresting Richards, Mick Jagger and gallery owner Robert Fraser. Beatle George Harrison left before the police arrived. The bust appeared to be a frame-up; a mysterious guest at the party having freely dispensed the same strain of 'White Lightning' that was available at UFO. Informer David Schneiderman disappeared after the arrests. At the trial Michael Havers QC, defending Jagger and Richards, claimed that Schneiderman had been planted by the *News of the World*, and allegation the newspaper described as a 'monstrous charge', but later admitted that it was the 'reliable source' whose tip-off led to the raid.

Shortly after, Small Face Steve Marriott and girlfriend Chrissie Shrimpton were arrested for cannabis possession. An added clause to the Dangerous Drugs Act gave police 'stop and search' powers, which remain in force. Freaks could be stopped for looking strange, no pretext needed.

Harassment at street level sent paranoia rippling through the underground. *IT* warned that police informers were circulating through underground flats and parties. Police raided Tiles on Oxford Street and Finch's Pub in Notting Hill. They searched patrons outside the Head Shop in Kensington. Police informants inveigled themselves into parties at communal houses in Earls Court and Notting Hill. Freaks wondered whether the longhair next to them was a police informant. Arrested freaks were coerced into cooperating, spilling information for reduced sentences.

When a raid turned up nothing, corrupt officers planted drugs on Arthur Brown. Underground stalwarts advised neophytes to keep an eye out for the 'fuzz' (as they called the police). At UFO, Jack Henry Moore sponsored a 'spot the fuzz contest', or announced 'the Fuzz' as special guests in a drawling Oklahoma lisp.

Mick Farren wrote: 'Authorities weren't slow, either, in getting their shit together to deal with hippies. As early as March, regional drug

squads were formed to deal with the "drug problem" (the only drug problem most of us experienced was not getting enough). In a grand showcase on the first weekend of operations, this new glossy narc squad managed to bust over one hundred and fifty hippies, the Rolling Stones and *IT* offices. Hundreds more were busted, in homes, on the street, or clubs.'

The crackdown arrived at Syd's front door. One night police arrived at Earlham Street looking for Pip Carter, who had a criminal record and heroin habit. They found Syd with Susie Gawler-Wright and sometime girlfriend and flatmate Kari-Ann Moller. As Barrett gave police a paranoid stare, Moller mollified them with tea and pleasantries – a near miss.

'There were tense situations created due to prosecution of drug situations. In some cases, persecution,' Wynne-Willson recalled. 'The main police contact the underground had was when police would raid houses looking for drugs. Someone obviously smoking a joint could expect to be harassed, but probably not arrested. I remember being surprised the fashion for calling them "pigs" came about. An unnecessary confrontation, not what I was about. I don't remember people being beaten by police, as they routinely are now. Although there was not a Criminal Justice Act then, police did what they wanted anyway. I was stopped and searched a few times. We imagined it would all change. In America, the movement imagined it would also change. Not so; in tiny ways, yes, but not the sweeping changes we imagined.'

'Someone discovered a little known law on the books,' explains Firdsi. 'We could sign up for free scripts of tincture of cannabis on the National Health, cannabis resin suspended in alcohol base. We soaked tobacco in the noxious crap, boiled alcohol off, and then rolled tobacco into joints. A tablespoon in orange juice got you high for eight hours. My friends got married on tincture, along with the entire wedding party, at the Chelsea Registry Office. Insane! We also haunted pharmacies and took anything with a high concentration of whatever looked interesting.'

Away from the moral panic, Wynne-Willson assumed control of the lightshow from Russell Page. Disenchanted with the scene and aftermath of his court case, Page left with Hester for Sant Mat ashram Radha Soami

Satsang in the Punjab. ‘Russell did lighting for a short time,’ explains Wynne-Willson. ‘I was always rather impatient, not with him, I knew I wanted control of it. Russell was much more laid-back. He did lightshows a few times at UFO and a gig in Leeds in a tram shelter, already finding it distasteful. That Leeds gig was not bad at all, but a highly charged atmosphere, quite a drunken scene, and dirty. Cream was lead band, but the Floyd went down well.

‘Reaction to Pink Floyd in provinces was not invariably hostile. There was nothing like UFO in the provinces, apart from some college gigs. A small proportion of hip audience members were not hostile; rather appreciative, but not on the level Pink Floyd themselves thought they should have been accepted. It was not like UFO or the Roundhouse at all.’

On 17 February, Pink Floyd returned to Cambridge to play at the Dorothy Ballroom as homecoming heroes. Gilmour and Bullitt, bending to changing sounds, were playing Hendrix covers as the Flowers in France. The same day, the Beatles released their epochal single ‘Strawberry Fields Forever’, backed with ‘Penny Lane’. DJ Kenny Everett, playing a pre-release promo on Radio London, was so impressed that he played the song twice in a row. With strange sounds coupled to an abstract lyric, it was the first Beatles single not to reach Number One since ‘Love Me Do’. ‘Strawberry Fields Forever’ nonetheless brought psychedelia to the pop masses.

In their first EMI promotional photo session, which took place that February, Barrett glowers unsmiling. In other photo shoots, his dilated pupils suggest he was stoned on cannabis. Syd’s drug use raised eyebrows among bandmates who hardly touched drugs. Mason admitted to ‘a tiny bit of dope smoking, but not tripping on the same scale the management were’.

‘Roger wasn’t into LSD, nor was he enthusiastic about it,’ says David Gale. ‘He had a much stronger, inflexible ego structure. Syd by temperament was experimental and hedonistic. Fit and healthy, he always seemed to bounce back.’ The others also had strong feelings about acid. Wright said, ‘[It was] wrong for me. I took two trips in my life. The first was enjoyable and before I was in Pink Floyd. Then I took one more and

I didn't enjoy it at all, so I never took it again.' Waters stated that he wasn't doing any drugs apart from alcohol.

That same month, Pink Floyd played a gig – memorable for all wrong reasons – at the California Ballroom in the wilds of Dunstable, Bedfordshire. The band had been booked for £75, whereas the Who garnered £400 per performance. Reaction to these city ponces in satin shirts and long hair escalated into open hostility. As the Equals played 'Baby Come Back' upstairs at the Vista Bar, the Floyd struggled through two forty-five-minute sets before a thin crowd who, having paid 8/6d each, were far from impressed. Equals fans leaned over the railing and poured beer on Pink Floyd. Waters recalled it as 'most unpleasant and fucking dangerous too'.

Waters complained to *Melody Maker:* 'We've been employed by so many freak-out merchants only because we have equipment and lighting and it saves promoters from having to hire lighting for the group. A freak-out should be relaxed, informal and spontaneous, not savage mob of geezers throwing bottles.' Barrett commented with naïve candour, 'People should stop drinking and throwing beer bottles around and be allowed to sit down and smoke hash, more peaceful for everybody that way. Our music, like drug taking, is a total experience.' He added, 'Psychedelic music is not here to stay, but the Pink Floyd are.'

'To stay alive we have to play lots of places and venues that are not suitable,' added Waters. 'This can't last and we're hoping to create our own venues. We all like our music. That's the driving force behind us. All the trappings of becoming vaguely successful, like being able to buy bigger amplifiers, none of that stuff is important.'

Driving back to London from a gig, Andrew King recalled to *Rolling Stone*: 'Someone made some cynical remark, like, "Fuck art, it's all about money." Barrett said, "You shouldn't say that. I've studied art for seven years. It's important, that's what it's all about."'Such sentiments carried little weight in the group. None of the others studied art, and were convinced that fame and fortune were where the action lay.

'I expected the group to be much more into the underground scene and they weren't remotely interested,' says Wynne-Willson. 'Roger and Nick were not into any hip ideal. Syd was, yes, though for a short time. As soon as there was any money around it became a different attitude.

Syd did not make time for the underground. Although the underground adopted them, I don't think they were of it, at all. Maybe Andrew and Peter were more.'

8. THE PIPER AT THE GATES OF DAWN

'Pan's touch turns everything brightly coloured, everything suddenly becomes vivid, exciting, and perilous. A curious cold exhilarating fear, a touch of panic. There would be a sudden rush of repressed emotion, like the bursting of a milldam. Once he was adrift in time and space and was afraid. But at the same time he felt a strange exhilaration and flowing power.'

The Goat Foot God
Dion Fortune, 1936

'...and then, in that utter clearness of the imminent dawn, while Nature, flushed with fullness of incredible colour, seemed to hold her breath for the event, he looked in the very eyes of the Friend and Helper. Saw the backward sweep of the curved horns, gleaming in the growing daylight. Saw the stern, hooked nose between the kindly eyes that were looking down on them humorously, while the bearded mouth broke into a half-smile at the corners. Saw the rippling muscles on the arm that lay across the broad chest, the long supple hand still holding the panpipes only just fallen away from the parted lips. Saw the splendid curves of the shaggy limbs disposed in majestic ease on the sward.'

The Wind in the Willows
Kenneth Grahame, 1908

On 21 February, Pink Floyd arrived at EMI Studios at 3 Abbey Road in St John's Wood, a leafy residential suburb of north London. The Studios' illustrious history began in 1931, when Sir Edward Elgar recorded 'Land of Hope and Glory' with the London Symphony Orchestra. Down a curved road, EMI Studios was housed in a two-storey white Georgian building set amid posh redbrick flats.

Attached to the building was a hangar-sized facility comprised of three purpose-built studios. Studio One, largest in the complex, was enormous and booked for classical orchestras. In spacious Studio Two, the Beatles did most of their work. Studio Three, one-tenth the size of Studio One, was smallest, built for chamber music.

Studio Three was an oddity. Because the original control room looking into the thirty-by-forty-foot studio was positioned over Studio One downstairs, there were sound isolation difficulties. EMI's solution was to build a new control room in the back left corner of the Georgian manse. Though the control room faced directly into the studio, EMI had neglected to build a door.

At Abbey Road, old and new collided, with rapid advances in audio engineering set amid the historic building. Advances in transistor technology and improved circuitry enabled new effects. Ring modulators, flanging, and phasing augmented the palette available to engineers and musicians. EMI's innovations left competitors in New York and Los Angeles baffled. Ringo Starr's coveted damped snare sound combined close miking, compression, and a half pack of cigarettes on the snare. Starr's bass drum was stuffed with a woollen sweater in an act of homespun British ingenuity.

A closed shop, all in-house producers came up through the ranks as tape operators, before graduating to become balance engineers. Progress was slow, but as the Beatles and George Martin scored hits at an unparalleled rate, promotion quickened. Technical staff wore white coats like laboratory assistants, while the rest wore ties. The building, painted a sickly institutional green with acoustic tiling, resembled a research plant more than a studio. Dingy tobacco-stained acoustic baffles and grim fluorescent lighting in windowless rooms had not seen a paintbrush in decades.

Engaging Norman Smith as Floyd's producer proved to be a double-edged sword. The downside was Smith's stolid production; the plus his underrated ear in developing sounds. Smith helped Pink Floyd structure songs. Having learned watching George Martin, with Lennon and McCartney, Smith had many ideas on building harmonies, inserting breaks, or editing instrumental passages that ran too long. Key changes

and harmonies were his stock in trade, his experience stemming from his jazz days and extensive pop session work.

'A gentle, kind person who made the artist comfortable, Smith was misunderstood,' says author Jeff Touzeau. '*Piper at the Gates of Dawn* is poked at as a poor production in audiophile circles – not true. Norman […] taught them a great deal.'

A hands-on producer, Smith spent more time on the studio floor than in the control booth. He saw his task as 'advancing the melodic side', suggesting chord changes and improving arrangements. Smith found Waters, Mason and Wright amenable, though his suggestions did not sit well with Barrett.

Smith felt he had to get a hit single in order to justify the album to EMI. He explained, 'I was looking as songs went by for one I could release as single. Perhaps get a hit and expand the audience for Pink Floyd. My main contribution, apart from advancing the melodic side of the music, was sounds. This interested them an awful lot, except for Syd.'

Smith's ally was balance engineer Peter Bown, a florid gay man in his forties with a Beatle fringe and jovial disposition, coupled with an extraordinary ear. George Martin described Bown as an 'electronics wizard'. 'Bown was one of Norman Smith's mentors,' says Kevin Ryan, co-author of the monumental *Recording the Beatles*. 'A senior engineer, Bown taught Smith engineering when Smith was starting. Bown had many years' recording experience on Smith. Though history hasn't painted him in this light, Bown was by far the most innovative and experimental engineer at EMI Studios. His youthful enthusiasm set him apart from other engineers. One co-worker called him "the world's oldest teenager", which seems apt. Bown refused to wear the standard jacket-and-tie uniform other engineers wore. Bown's paisley shirts rivalled anything worn by groups. Because he was so good at what he did, management let him get away with it.'

Sadly, Bown's flamboyance meant he was denied promotion to producer. Having begun his tenure at EMI in the early fifties recording classical orchestras, he was EMI's top 'pop' engineer, recording hits for the Hollies, Gerry and the Pacemakers, Cilla Black and many others. His wide-ranging ear and inventive stance meant he was open to Pink Floyd's experimentation and sympathetic to what the group were trying to create.

‘Bown has not received the credit he deserves,’ says Ryan. ‘More than any other engineer at EMI, he experimented endlessly. Bown was gear-obsessed, always trying new equipment and looking for unconventional sounds.’

The third team member, tape operator Jeff Jarratt, switched tape spools, filled in session sheets, filed tapes in the tape library, wired electronic gear and made tea. Jarratt ensured that tape rolled when needed, rewound for overdubs, and that each take was noted. All punch-in edits were done by Jarratt, a tricky manoeuvre where Smith said, ‘Now!’ and Jarratt dropped in the overdubs.

The trio were a triple threat of experience, innovation and willingness to throw away the rulebook when need be. Ready to use unorthodox microphone arrangements, they took care to ensure the best possible sound. When the group sought an unusual sound, Smith and Bown conferred, sometimes buzzing staff technicians through the intercom. They arrived clad in white coats, puzzled out what was needed and brought in various filters and EQs to create the sound the engineer requested. Pink Floyd could not have chosen a better place to record.

By modern standards, recording equipment at EMI was primitive. Even then, EMI was behind the curve. Though eight-track recording equipment was already in use at studios such as Trident in Soho, EMI still recorded on four-track machines and wouldn’t upgrade for another year. However, EMI’s engineers bettered them all. The standard tape recorder was the revered Studer J-37, a four-track machine weighing three hundred pounds. Powered by 57 vacuum valves, the Studer gave recordings on the inch-wide tape lustrous warmth.

‘To overcome four-track limitations, EMI engineers filled all four tracks then mixed these four tracks to one or two tracks on a second four-track tape machine,’ explains Ryan. ‘This reduction mix “reduced” tracks. After bouncing to the second machine, they then had two or three free tracks to continue recording, alongside material bounced from the first tape. They even sometimes recorded new parts live during the reduction mix, bouncing live additions down with already recorded material. In this way they could add new parts without using precious free tracks.’

Piper's sound has several vital ingredients. All recording took place through EMI's custom-built REDD mixing consoles. The hefty grey REDD.51 consoles used in Studios Two and Three were exceedingly rare – only three were ever constructed. Spartan controls disguised sensitive valves inside the desk. Preamplifiers were the EMI-designed REDD.47, imparting punchy mid-range character to the sound. Each channel had boost and cut controls for treble and bass, though there were no mid-frequency controls, and no sweepable parametric. Engineers literally plugged small equalisation units into the console to change the desk's capabilities. Plug-ins came in two flavours – 'Classic' and 'Pop'. Changing the plug-in changed the curves of the desk EQ, for the 'Classic' EQ plug-in, bass and treble were shelving EQs at 100 Hz and 10 kHz. The 'Pop' EQ plug-in had bass control identical with 'Classic', though treble control centred at 10 kHz when cutting, and 5 kHz when boosting.

The Fairchild 660 limiter was another weapon in EMI engineers' arsenal. Delivering warmth and clarity in mixes, the Fairchild boosted midrange without compromising treble and bass. Limiters prevented audio levels from going higher than a specified point. The Fairchild was excellent for electric guitars, vocals, and drum sounds. Though engineers at EMI paired Fairchild with a modified Altec compressor, the RS124, Bown marched to his own drum. A compressor cut dynamic range on the audio signal. In research for *Recording the Beatles,* Kevin Ryan and co-author Brian Kehew discovered Bown recorded Floyd's first album with an experimental EMI prototype Zener limiter. Bown combined the valve-powered Fairchild with the solid-state Zener for a precise warm sound. Ryan notes, 'Bown was using Zener limiters on sessions since early 1966. Other engineers did not; any Floyd sessions recorded by other engineers used the standard Altec and Fairchild blend. Bown's preference for the prototype limiter was prescient, as Zener became a prime component in EMI's next generation 'TG' consoles – used to record Floyd's *Dark Side of the Moon*, and much sought-after for unique sound.' The Zener prototype had faster attack time than the Altec, with hard limiting and smooth distortion critical in shaping *Piper at the Gate's of Dawn.*

Bown and studio manager David Harris positioned microphones an hour before the session began. Testament to their efficiency, the band plugged in and played with little ado. The volume used by the Floyd saturated the small Studio Three with sound. The room had peculiar acoustics, which EMI staff tamed through extensive screens and baffles. Engineers at the studio tried to minimise bleed by isolating amps and speakers with screens. Not so on Pink Floyd sessions. They faced one another, with few audio screens between – a practise Peter Bown and Norman Smith instituted earlier with the Beatles. Although Bown and Smith did not use screens on sources, they always used screens around the bass amp. Bown often used the vocal isolation booth for Floyd sessions.

Setting Syd alone with headphones in the booth made the best use of his quiet voice without requiring him to strain. Ryan notes, 'Contrast *Revolver*, recorded by Geoff Emerick with screens, and much of it in Studio Three, with *Piper*. You sense the difference this isolation makes. The lack of screens on Norman's Beatles sessions he learnt from Peter Bown in his training.'

Each engineer had particular preferences, though on almost all the sessions Smith used Bown's set-up. Bown placed Mason's drums in the south-west corner, with baffles to rear and sides. He defied standard pop practice by putting five microphones on Mason's kit. Bown miked the bass drums, cymbal and snare. He also suspended an overhead microphone above to capture snare and general drum-kit image below. Bown stood in front of Mason's kit as he played, and listened. In the control room, he reproduced Mason's drum sound with added boost from Fairchild limiters.

Waters's Selmer bass amp was placed behind a small screen in the corner. An AKG D19C microphone was placed inches from the amp's grille. Bass was also directly injected into the desk in the control room. Wright's organ was placed in the open, with Bown miking Farfisa Combo-Compact Organ's built-in speaker.

Sometimes Wright played the studio Hammond RT-3 Organ, useful for church and classical touches. Bown put a microphone a foot away from the organ's rotating Leslie speaker for oscillation effects. With an acoustic upright and grand pianos available when needed, Wright was

meticulous. Staff indulged him on time-consuming overdubs to ensure he got the sound he wanted.

Syd was placed behind baffles in v-formation, with his amp miked with one U67 microphone, as at Sound Techniques. Bown recalled, 'Syd's guitar was always a problem because he would not keep still and was always fiddling with his sound. He used to go and kick his echo box every now and then, just because he liked the sound it made.'

As Ryan explains, 'Bown's microphone choices differed from the standard set-up Norman Smith used with the Beatles and other artists. Norman had not used DI on bass or D19c on bass or bass drum. He never used KM56 on drums, Sony C38, or U67 on electric guitar. One similarity between Bown's set-up and Smith's was a Neumann U48 for vocals, though every engineer used U48 for vocals. At EMI, policy ensured recording equipment was the domain of balance engineer, not producer. As soon as Norman moved into producer capacity, he became an "ideas" man and left technical concerns to the engineer… Smith joined EMI to become a producer, never wanting to be an engineer.'

The control room's Altec 605A monitor speakers were nothing like Sound Technique's Tannoy speakers. Smith and Bown learnt to compensate for the limited frequency range by ear. In the final mixing stage, Bown used studio innovations to embellish and polish songs. Frequently used was the newly invented ADT, or Artificial Double-Tracking. Developed for John Lennon, who had tired of manually double-tracking his vocals, the ADT created a double-tracked vocal from one vocal track. Taping the recorded vocal off the Studer sync-head and feeding it to another tape recorder, it replayed the copy vocal slightly out of time with the original vocal. Properly adjusted, the effect was convincing.

'Used all over *Piper*,' says Ryan, 'ADT may well be on every song in some capacity. Oftentimes, you hear what sounds like double-tracked vocal, with one voice in the left speaker and one in the right. In actuality, this is single-tracked vocal, though Bown used ADT to conjure convincing doubled vocal in the opposite channel. ADT was useful for adding depth to a stereo mix when mixing from four tracks. The engineer had a fifth source to play with that could be applied to any or all four tracks. ADT was great on instruments as well, not just vocals. ADT was

useful in mono mixes for creating odd-sounding vocals and phasing sounds. ADT added depth.'

The entire mix was swamped in echo, from the excellent studio echo chambers to the underused EMT plate reverbs that formed a key ingredient in *Piper*'s sound. The echo contrasted with severe limiting that accented Barrett's dramatic style. The result, taut and sprawling, heightened the mix.

The sessions were not without problems. 'Syd was difficult,' asserted Smith to Alan di Perna. 'They would be in the studio recording a number. Syd was doing the singing. I would bring them into the control room to listen to the playback. I would suggest a little phrasing alteration. Syd nodded, didn't say anything, though he seemed to be paying attention. I said, "Okay, go back into the studio and we'll do another take."

'Back in the studio Syd sang the same as the previous take. I thought, "I'm wasting my time here." I realised Syd did not get any pleasure out of recording. Syd would write these songs, go to an underground club and perform in front of fans. That was his big thing.'

Smith told Jeff Touzeau: 'Syd wasn't interested in creating specific sounds to go along with his lyrics or story lines. He probably thought there was no need for additional sounds. He didn't want to embellish his songs unnecessarily.'

'Norman felt he didn't communicate with Syd well,' explained Mason. 'But Syd took very kindly to some of Norman's ideas.'

Each time Smith called Syd in, he had to leave the studio and walk halfway round the building to get to the control room. Kevin Ryan explains, 'One exited the control room, walked through the lobby, passed the security guard's desk, turned left down hallways, and passed through double doors before finally entering the main corridor leading to Studio Three.'

'Something about Syd Barrett's songs was indescribable – nondescript, but had Barrett magic for an awful lot of people,' asserted Smith. 'I got along as well as anybody could with Syd. He was in control. Syd was the only one doing any writing, the only one who I as producer had to convince if I had any ideas. The trouble with Syd was he would agree with almost everything I said and then go back in and do the same bloody thing again! I was getting nowhere. I never saw Syd taking drugs

in the studio, though he had the kind of character, even if he hadn't taken any, you'd think he was on drugs. A peculiar person. You couldn't hold a sensible conversation with him for longer than thirty seconds. Waters had the best rapport with Syd, though even he found it difficult.'

'With Syd you just never knew what was going to occur,' Bown recalled. 'We all knew he was taking drugs fairly heavily, though Syd was very creative. That he didn't understand the recording process terribly well meant he was less rigid about what could and couldn't be done. No one understood Pink Floyd, in particular Norman. Pink Floyd were meant to be different.'

Both Bown and Jarratt were awed by Barrett's energy and brilliance. 'Syd Barrett was in control, he knew what he wanted,' asserted Bown to David Parker in his book *Random Precision*. 'He sometimes had to explain to me what it was about, or meant to be about… Always the bright, creative chap who couldn't sit still, always wanted to try something new, always had great ideas.' Jarratt noted that 'Syd was an absolute genius. Full of ideas, an incredibly creative person.'

Syd did not waste time theorising. When he had an idea in the studio, he went ahead and did it. Ideas spilled from him. He often exclaimed, 'Yeah, yeah!' in enthusiasm. Andrew King recounted, 'You did feel Syd had almost magical powers.'

Barrett often bristled at Smith's patronising manner, a trait which stirred his rebellious streak. When Smith told Barrett to sing a part in a different style, Barrett agreed, and then sang the same way, repeatedly. Told to do a guitar solo the same way, he played in a different register.

With pop music an art form of repetition, Barrett was akin to a jazz player in his use of improvisation at every turn. He resisted Smith's efforts to impose structure on his songs. Because of the manner in which the unusual meter of his lyrics adhered to the melody, Barrett had fixed ideas about what he did and did not want. A flummoxed Smith could only marvel: 'There was certain stubbornness to the man's makeup.'

Smith said, 'With Syd there wasn't much point in changing chords or suggesting flashy jazz based chords or analysing musical content. What I had to look for was what they wanted to say, and [what] statement they wanted to make. To help them as much as I could with suggestions, though mainly creating sounds to enhance statement or mood.'

Smith and Barrett's relationship remained contentious throughout the recording of *Piper*, with Smith questioning Barrett's ideas. There was method to Barrett's madness, even as he strummed barefoot in EMI's Studio Three. The technical aspects bored him, while Syd's Zen-like insistence on 'first take, best take' spontaneity irritated Smith. His songs were well structured, prepared through continual playing. Barrett's method was spontaneous rather than haphazard. He was judicious in editing compositions onstage, or at home before he recorded. Wynne-Willson commented, 'He'd sit around with copious hash and write these incredible songs… crafted carefully and deliberately.' Syd performed tricky sonic somersaults on his guitar with great flair. Although the pressure on him was intense, his output was formidable.

In 1967, EMI Studios seeded psychedelia, with the Beatles logging seven hundred hours on *Sgt Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*, the Pretty Things recording rock opera *S.F. Sorrow,* Tomorrow's sole album (engineered by Bown), and Pink Floyd recording a new track almost every session. In these albums lies a composite of euphoric aspiration as the psychedelic wave churned to a crest. All four albums have sparkling wonder. Though also dislocation and darkness nipping at the edges, reflecting the undercurrents underground.

'I was just excited,' recalled Wright. 'Doing your first album, putting your music onto tape, and knowing the Beatles are next door, doing *Sgt Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band.* I was a snob before that, a "jazz-o". I didn't believe pop music meant anything at all. When I heard *Sgt Pepper's* it changed my attitude to what people like us could do.'

As an added surprise, Ringo, Paul and George took a breather from recording 'Fixing a Hole' in Studio Two, to pop in and offer the Floyd some encouragement on their first day. Smith and the band discussed plans for the album inside Studio Three. They got off to a rough start: Smith wanted to re-record 'Arnold Layne' and 'Candy and a Currant Bun'. The group refused, showing stunning cheek for a band on first day's work. Smith grumbled, 'I could see they weren't too keen to attempt a remake, so we never did have a go at that.'

Pink Floyd began recording at 11:00pm and worked through until dawn. With Smith and Bown at the console, they recorded six takes of 'Matilda Mother' at a rapid clip. 'Matilda Mother' had progressed from

its acoustic origins into a taut rocker. Lyrics were culled from Belloc's *Cautionary Tales*, tied with an excerpt from traditional folk rhyme 'The Squirrel', adapted to reflect Russell Page's trouble with the law.

'Matilda Mother' opened with bass and organ. The intro features curious sustained chords, led by Wright, whose fairground organ underpins the song's harmonic structure; he also adds a tremulous solo vocal on verses. The verse's peculiar chords betray its acoustic origin, tuned down a step, with the chorus in bright bold major chords. The group were new to background vocals and harmonising. Here Smith was essential in guiding them through, rehearsing them at the studio's piano. Barrett devised a call-and-response interval, whispering '*shhh*' in the left channel and muted '*pow!*' in the right. This epitomises his sense of subtlety and sensitivity to atmosphere. The effect was a touch abrupt, due to Smith fiddling with Syd's microphone volume.

'Matilda Mother' features audible edits and laughter between verses. Smith and engineer Peter Bown edited various tempi, with mixing done on the spot and at a quick clip. Seeing the song as single, they truncated the improvisational solos with an awkward razor cut edit right into four-track tape at 1:58. Kevin Ryan notes: 'On "Matilda Mother" all instrumental tracks were mixed to one track, with live vocal mixed to its own track. This left two free tracks on the new tape to record extra vocals on. Though also meant all instruments were relegated to one track – fine for mono, though a lopsided stereo mix.'

The album's working title, *Projection*, stressed the vital role of modified projectors in lightshows, as well as being a psychoanalytic term for attributing qualities to what we perceive.

German director Edmund Wolf arrived at UFO on 24 February to film *Die Jungen Nachtwandler* (*The Young Nightcrawler*), a documentary on the British musical scene.

With Hoppy presiding over proceedings, bopping in a satin coat from Granny's, crazed punters shook and shimmied in convincing approximations of St Vitus's Dance. They wave hands in the air, dancing as though in disturbed trance. A shirtless young man thrashes with epileptic abandon, almost bashing the camera with his head. All too redolent of *Childhood's End*, where children spin into maddened trances.

Sweat, rolling eyes, and gurning faces presage the rave era excesses of twenty-five years later, or call to mind De Sade's fellow inmates at the Asylum of Charenton. In two months, the movement gained rapid-fire momentum as freaks spilled from everywhere. Wolf's cameras captured stoned punters in satin shirts sipping Cokes with soft blank faces, like idle drones. This epitomises the larger underground, with frenzied action at the centre, while those at the edges seemed sedated.

Underground groover Susan Latham says, 'When I heard Syd's band, strobe dancing to jamming Pink Floyd all night, I was work-shy even then. People who worked seemed clever and god-like in personality, knowing some divine mystery of conversation I just could not fathom for myself, and possessing bodies that moved in ways mine could not. We were seeking madness, "freaking out" we used to call it. Work was not going to help in this quest. We were about to uncover a new reality, previously unseen, and unexplored, and change dimension. I never heard their words; it was just a script for my unconscious.

'Dance was a large part of that gathering, time-lapse living with visible peaks or highs and lows with highs on their backs on which one surfed like a time machine. We were prisoners of robotic impulses we refused to free ourselves from. I do not think you can see anywhere such freaked-out dancing as Middle Earth and UFO, perhaps in primitive tribes. Trouble is, one forgets house numbers and addresses, time, and oneself. One has no defences.'

Wolf and his crew captured Pink Floyd in a particularly frenzied take on 'Interstellar Overdrive' before a voluble crowd. Hot from a gig in Windsor, Barrett lets loose with howling distorted riffs, shaking his head from side to side as though possessed. In a potent music for potent times, Barrett stirred pandemonium. A cascading firestorm of echo-laden droplets showers from Syd's guitar as he bangs his Zippo against the highly-amplified instrument's neck.

Mainstream music weeklies shifted from jazz, to pop, to rock. Until late 1966, reporters for *NME* and *Melody Maker* were older, all into jazz, and did not offer comprehensive coverage of the emerging scene. Reviews were often laughable. Chris Welch and Nick Jones of *Melody Maker* formed a new phalanx. Initially viewing the underground from a cynical distance, they were gradually drawn into the scene at UFO. The

duo led the charge in *Melody Maker* editorial meetings, insisting the paper cover the psych scene rather than anodyne pop.

The underground press spread alternative views to hipsters, freaks and groovers. Writers at *Oz* pushed the envelope with riotous exhortations featuring redoubtable feminist Germaine Greer, or the satirical posturing of editor Richard Neville and Colin MacInnes 'In Praise of Ugliness'.

Oz was awash in multicoloured inks and free-form typesetting, uneven column lengths, hand-drawn illustrations of a kind not seen before, or since. Each issue was different. Coloured inserts tumbled out, fluorescent gatefold covers accordioned open, and provocative Day-Glo stickers flew onto India-craft bedspreads. *Oz* angered straights with a two-page poster of a naked girl perched atop a collage toilet that looked suspiciously like the Houses of Parliament. A foldout insert by Martin Sharp of 'Toad Wilson of Whitehall' saw the hapless Prime Minister as Toad from *The Wind in the Willows*. Elsewhere, there were articles on where to score amphetamines in London, Germaine Greer on 'In Bed with the English' and a handy 'Guide to Living in Sin'. Black Australian humour ('mocking the wowser') appalled, and then intrigued the underground.

Oz and *IT* had links with American underground papers the *Oracle* in San Francisco and New York's *East Village Other*. The Underground Press Syndicate sent copies to foreign underground papers with free reign to reprint. Underground press also introduced headache-inducing graphic design layouts, a problem which persists in the alternative media.

On 27 February, Pink Floyd continued the EMI sessions with Syd's mystic touchstone 'Chapter 24'. Barrett's central song on *Piper* illustrated his holistic and metaphysical yearnings, as he announced his vision with innocent authority. Andrew King recalled Syd relating a mystical experience where Pan, the sylvan deity, 'had given Syd insight and understanding into the way nature works. It formed into his holistic view of the world. Syd did believe in some Gnostic, poetic revolution that was blowing through his body, and through the world. Syd did feel the whole world was flowing through him.' With Waters's opening Asian gong, the stage was set for Barrett's recital of the twenty-fourth hexagram of *I Ching*.

‘Chapter 24’ is held together by organ and cello, or bowed bass, with nary a guitar in sight. Nor drums, with Mason using tubular bells, played with rubber hammers. Overdubbed harmonium and cymbal augment the baroque ethereality. Saturated in melody, ‘Chapter 24’ reverberated with sudden awakening.

Augmented with reverb and echo, Barrett’s incantatory chant recalls musical passages accompanying alchemical texts from the 15th century, with limited notes, flat and oblong in cadence. Syd affects a curious burr, along with a precise and enunciated vocal delivery, redolent of an impossible purity.

‘Chapter 24’ has a quality like a liturgical chant, with a staccato cadence so far from rock’n’roll that their familiarity with plainsong, or parallel fourth and fifth intervals of organum, could have inspired Barrett and Wright. With Wright’s organ soloing among his best, highlighted by exotic Eastern airs. A droning inflection recalling Lennon’s ‘Rain’ forms a haunting bass and organ structure.

Rick added Mannborg Harmonium, a foot-pedalled organ that sucked air through reeds. Dissatisfied, they re-recorded the track, bounced all the instruments to one track and added lush harmonies, coached by Norman Smith at the studio piano, even joining in on harmony vocals. The voices strike resonant notes, wavering in pitch, rising in crescendo right into the fade-out. Inspired *glissandi* guitar notes trail into the ether unresolved, redolent of folk and raga.

‘The Gnome’, ‘The Scarecrow’ and ‘Chapter 24’ form a three-song Gnostic pastoral suite on the second half of the album. The trio of songs are largely acoustic and focused around similar melodic lines. Each of Barrett’s albums has a similar section, which by accident or design, encapsulates his state of mind. Each is as close to Syd busking on acoustic guitar unaccompanied as possible. This is Syd at his most mystical, conjuring fairytales, folklore and the occult.

A world away from ‘Chapter 24’’s meditative air, the quartet set about tackling ‘Interstellar Overdrive’. Jenner said, ‘Norman Smith was being the perfect A&R man. He realised Syd could write great pop songs. If we’d put out what we were playing live, it wouldn’t have sold fuck all.

One song on *The Piper at the Gates of Dawn* like the live show was "Interstellar Overdrive".'

A French edition *Arnold Layne* EP included a five-minute excerpt from the ten-minute-plus second take, raw and skeletal. Nonetheless, as he found his technique Barrett's guitar is well realised and no longer germinal. Reverb and feedback made rippling pink noise, which Barrett sculpted. Bown let the group play at full volume in order to gauge how to best record them. The Floyd's stage volume destroyed four heavy-duty condenser and ribbon microphones, testament to their destructive wattage. 'By Christ, it was loud!' said Bown, who was severely chastised by EMI management, who informed him next time he was liable for repairs.

'Interstellar Overdrive' maps an explosive opening, with vibrations from guitars causing the snare drum to rattle. Pink Floyd thunder along as Syd plays palm muted E5 chords with repeated down strokes. Around the second minute, Smith and Bown work the faders, bringing Syd's guitar to the brink of distortion, before easing him into the improvisational middle section. Syd's guitar slows in increments, like Apollo afterburners separating in silent bursts. Highlighting the song's understated atmospherics and ambient tonalities, Wright drops into lower registers on the organ. With Waters and Mason holding down a pulse, Wright and Barrett assay space.

Barrett's guitar flights, sketching filigrees in distortion and echo, relied on Wright's organ creating an instant counterpoint to hold the harmonic structure together. Barrett and Wright used distortion and echo to balance each other, the extreme volume smoothed by the Binson. Syd tapped into a full expressive echo, extending his note delay beyond the sharp attack of his guitar. Warm analogue delay (and irregular decay) was a fulcrum for balancing the needling treble of the Farfisa with Syd's guitars.

Doctor Amy Bauer, Professor of Music Theory at the University of California, Irvine, says, 'In "Interstellar Overdrive" there are many connections to sixties modal jazz. Not only John Coltrane, also more outré free jazz happening in New York City. Baroque influences tie into later Baroque influences in heavy metal (and Procol Harum). There are connections with static, "sound-mass" Karlheinz Stockhausen

experiments. Modern classical composer György Ligeti's "Volumina" is certainly a touchstone, though there is a pulse through "Interstellar Overdrive", with the whole work in a tight register.'

At the five-and-half-minute mark, the most evident antecedent is Ligeti, whose 1962 'Volumina' opened with massed organ chords descending to silence (and whose first rehearsal burnt out Gothenburg Cathedral's pipe organ). Syd unleashes mighty, cascading *glissandi*. Using the Binson, he extends them as far as they will go in the thick, miasmic mix. Wright adds cello in the deepest space section from the fifth minute to close of the seventh. From 6:15 on, we have pure Binson sampling like a pendulum on a grandfather clock, as Mason shimmers across the spectrum with showering cymbals. Waters's bass croaks like a frog at banks of the Cam. In deep space, we find Grantchester Meadows.

At seven minutes in, 'Interstellar Overdrive' becomes, by turns, clangourous and harsh, lulling and ethereal. Barrett rides a crescendo of *glissando* guitar that gives way to exploratory improvisation, drenched in organ and Binson echo, with layered guitar in the background. Syd pulls back sharply as Waters lays in with two repeating chords not unlike a heartbeat, edgy and restless. Barrett counterpoints Waters's massed chords with sharp, echo-repeated single-note stabs.

'It becomes very difficult to pick out details, as there are many overdubs,' observes Bauer. 'The hovering bass starts a new riff, pulling everything back to the tonic. Syd's guitar even plays a tune, low in the mix. Overdubbed guitar and organ prevail, also improvisation emphasised further by Waters's bass riff, and many toms overdubbed in march rhythm by Mason. A fadeout features processed guitar, with more descending – then ascending – organ. Then, back to regular pulsing, which sounds like more reverse Binson echo guitar loops, this time over an F bass. More rising organ and *musique concrète* sounds. Analogue organ's rise and fall in this end portion sounds very modal, destabilising texture further. Lead guitar playing circular lines in the background comes up in the mix and begins aping the organ's chromatic descent earlier with measured drop down to E, per the beginning, emphasising E (rinse, repeat). Bass gets a solo here; everyone jams on E, and then returns to the opening riff.'

On 4 March, Sidney Arthur Beecher-Stevens, the head of EMI's A&R Department, accompanied Norman Smith to a Pink Floyd gig on Regent Street. 'I classed them as weird but good,' he said. Though open to new sounds, Beecher-Stevens belonged to the old school of record company executives, who saw pop music as a lucrative-but-disposable commodity.

The success of The Beatles' *Revolver* convinced EMI there was money to be made in underground sounds, prompting the signing of the Pretty Things and Pink Floyd. At best, these groups represented a good gamble. At worst, a write-off to be chalked up to a changing market. As Beecher-Stevens studied Syd's druggy demeanour and spaced-out entourage, warning bells rang in his ears. 'One of the boys in the group, and some people around them, seemed a bit strange, one reason I wanted Norman Smith as producer. I thought he was close enough to their music to keep a firm hand on sessions.'

The next day, the Floyd played support to Lee Dorsey and Jeff Beck at the Saville Theatre in London's West End, where Beatles manager Brian Epstein hoped to emulate San Franciscan Bill Graham's eclectic and hip Fillmore shows. Photographer Tony Gale recalled the show as 'the first time gelatine "psychedelic" light effects were used in a theatre. Photographers used to bright spot lights were caught off-guard by low-key lighting and had slowed films in cameras, hence somewhat blurred static images which, in retrospect, added to the intended effect.'

On 6 March, Pink Floyd travelled to Manchester to appear with the Move on Granada Television's *The Rave.* The quartet's television debut was marred by hassles surrounding the band's insistence on being given proper equipment for their lightshow. The producer insisted that Pip Carter's open flame burner under liquid lights was against regulations. In the end, the group got their way, though the show never screened. Psychedelia did not translate well in the black-and-white mediums of print or television

More concrete televisual exposure followed the very next day, as the popular *Scene at 6.30* news-magazine programme aired a special highlighting the burgeoning underground entitled, 'It's So Far Out, It's Straight Down!' Pink Floyd were featured at UFO performing 'Interstellar Overdrive' and a germinal 'Matilda Mother' with its original Belloc lyrics. A stoned Paul McCartney, in kipper tie from Mr Fish,

rambled on-camera, ‘The straights should welcome the underground because it stands for freedom. It’s dead straight!’ The programme provided a wider section of the public with their first exposure to the strange goings-on in London.

In line with the growing power of visual media, television disseminated ideas, often through a disapproving filter, and brought unwelcome attention. Prime underground figures Hoppy, Miles and Jim Haynes candidly stated the subversive tenor of the movement – advocacy of personal freedom in all forms extending into radical politics and drug use. ‘If people feel what we’re doing is disrupting their order, then what we’re doing is anarchy,’ said Jim Haynes. ‘A revolution of youth against old values of society,’ said Miles. Their cool, cerebral tones made their message more threatening to the square world.

Hoppy and a band of freaks were filmed staging an impromptu happening at Piccadilly Circus, brandishing signs, playing flutes, and creating a spectacle verging on outright provocation. Bewildered onlookers craned their necks from double-decker buses. Despite being on his way to trial, Hoppy dashed around Piccadilly Circus under drizzling rain, waving a soggy placard that screamed ‘Pot Is Fun’. There was a devil-may-care attitude in these middle-class upstarts’ rebellion against the establishment, noble and naïve.

Drug busts and outright persecution engendered a combative political mood. (When appeals were made by Mick Farren and Suzy Creamcheese to the UFO audience to pay Dave Tomlin’s bust fine, one young girl insisted upon taking off her diamond ring and donating it to the cause). Freedom to pursue one’s bliss proved an uphill slog both ways. The crackdown was immediate.

Pink Floyd showed up at the Marquee for a gig on 9 March. As opening band the Thoughts worked through the first set, Pink Floyd heard the day’s underground news: the Obscene Publications Squad had raided *International Times* offices in the cellar of Indica bookshop. A dozen police officers stormed in, shouting, ‘Close the shop before we tear the place apart!’ They seized typewriters, accounting ledgers, eight thousand subscription copies, and ashtrays. A heavy lorry sat outside and police

loaded the lot aboard. *IT* staffers stood at the kerb in stunned disbelief. Jack Henry Moore leapt on the lorry as a man pushed him off.

'We weren't waiting for it to happen,' recalls Miles. 'We were naïve… it took a while for someone to be outraged enough for the police to come. The intention was to close us. They took everything away, even phone books, and [the] editor's address book. They stripped the office. There wasn't anything left, just an empty room with few chairs. They took away contents of ashtrays, and searched the bookshop upstairs.

'They kept everything for three months and then brought it all back with no charges. Closing a newspaper was a police state activity you would expect in South Africa or Indonesia. Imagine them going into the *Guardian* and taking away their lists of advertisers, you'd never hear the end of it. The English press did fuck all about *IT* being raided, to be expected. Because we were an alternative underground press, we didn't expect support and we didn't get it.'

The *Scene at 6.30* special prompted the corrupt OPS into action. The OPS busted *International Times*, ICA (for allowing a dead sheep to be dismembered as part of an 'auto destructive happening'), and the V&A's Beardsley exhibition to deflect attention from bribes they had collected from Soho pornographers. Several high-ranking OPS officers were later indicted on corruption charges, including the head of the Obscene Publications Squad, and head of the Flying and Drugs Squads.

The bust had been brewing ever since Jim Haynes posted the subversive paper to Arts Council chairman Lord Goodman. Nudity, ribald cartoons, frank discussions of drugs and police harassment, running with satirical pieces besieging the establishment, left the old man red with fury. Goodman rang the Director of Public Prosecutions to petition him to mount the raid. Lord Goodman had a personal animosity toward Miles. In December 1966, when Miles was nominated to the Arts Council Literary Advisory Panel, the furious Goodman had him thrown off.

Pilcher and Phillips from New Scotland Yard Drugs Division searched all ashtrays. Police smashed through the private administration office, rifling business correspondence and rare books. They took file copies of the paper, business correspondence, and manuscripts. When asked if they were going to take books from the bookshop, they replied, 'You won't have much left by the time we've finished.'

As well as the eight thousand copies of *International Times,* they took thirty-five other books judged to be obscene, including *Naked Lunch*, which had been cleared of obscenity charges years before. An unexpected ally, the Home Secretary, Roy Jenkins (whose arrest *International Times* called for in a headline weeks earlier), derailed the Obscene Publications Squad's efforts against the magazine. Jenkins told the OPS to 'steer clear of borderline cases in the arts and instead concern themselves wholly in enforcing the law on hard-core pornography'.

With the Bryan Morrison Agency booking Pink Floyd, their gig schedule steamrolled into high gear. The group played almost every night, sometimes twice. Even for young men just out of their teens, cramped journeys on back roads to play second on the bill to Geno Washington and the Ram Jams at a working-men's club in East Sussex was murder. Thirty-eight gigs in 1966 were nothing compared to the two hundred and eleven one-nighters in grotty clubs and out-of-town ballrooms across Britain. On the road, the band often had no dressing rooms, sometimes no stage, and were regularly met by incomprehension. The Floyd washed up in the men's loo, fixed stage outfits and clambered on. At one ballroom, the group was bemused to find a revolving stage, jerkily rotating for punters in stalls, while road managers struggled to keep amplifiers from toppling. At other ballrooms, the group were amused to find boys and girls on opposite sides of the hall.

'Only lately have the Pink Floyd been doing much work,' Mason explained. 'In the past we played about one date a fortnight and spent the rest of the time sitting in pubs saying how nice it would be to be famous.'

At a gig in Camberley's Agincourt Ballroom, concertgoer John Scott Cree recalled, 'A disparate crowd of less than forty, a dozen from Sandhurst, training school for army officers, over the road. Jolly with blazers, ties, and well-dressed lady friends, they danced holding hands in a big circle to opening band Sky. Pink Floyd seemed to go down less well. The crowd reduced in size by their absence in the second set. Pink Floyd were incredibly loud. A double-bass drum kit, played with tympani beaters, was inaudible. I'd thought the Who were loud, though this took the biscuit.

‘Excitement was augmented by their novel lightshow. One extended number featured flashing coloured lights exploding over the almost static, fur-coated, bespectacled Syd Barrett, shaking his bowed, fuzzy-haired head from side to side over his guitar. An amazing evening, in some way historic. I asked cloakroom staff for the poster – they seemed glad it was over.’

In late February, Pink Floyd shot a pop promo for ‘Arnold Layne’. Director Derek Nice filmed them for potential screenings on *Top of the Pops*; shot on a blustery winter day by the English seashore, straddling pop with distinct dark humour. Pink Floyd carried a shop window mannequin around a windy beach in Wittering, Sussex. Syd was resplendent in a striking Japanese kimono emblazoned with *kanji* characters and the same silver reflective discs he’d glued to his guitar.

After much slapstick carrying on, with Waters executing neat pantomime tricks with an umbrella and a bowler hat, Pink Floyd scampered about in high spirits. At the end of the film, the group trooped off the beach, Barrett holding the mannequin’s severed head. The other three carted off the body dressed as pallbearers, outfitted in Victorian funereal top hats and frock coats.

‘The Floyd were jokey and experimental, willing to welcome some auto-destructive art,’ recalled Nice. ‘The choice of a lay figure [mannequin] seemed apt in the short and surreal time frame as we headed to the East Wittering sands. Inevitably, a bowler hat and frock coat appeared in the multifarious wardrobe of bizarre objects we gathered. As you see, Arnold is supported on either side, not unlike the World War Two character in the film *Albert R.N.* His legs would not stay joined onto his body, so he appears over the dunes rocking and legless. The budget for the “Arnold Layne” promo was similar to commercials, about £2,000.’

On 10 March ‘Arnold Layne’, backed by ‘Candy and a Currant Bun’, was released, the band’s first single. From tinny transistor radios burst a peculiar voice, issuing from primeval Albion and pointing towards to the future. Despite its conspicuous lack of minor chords, for a pop single ‘Arnold Layne’ was downbeat. Barrett’s voice favoured intimations of

darkness, leagues apart from the chart-topping fare proffered by balladeer Vince Hill, Sandy Shaw and the Monkees. ‘Arnold Layne’, like ‘Paint It, Black’ and ‘Strawberry Fields Forever’, brought darkness into pop, hinting that every dream had a nightmare on its flip side.

In Barrett’s lyrics, to ‘see’ is to ‘know’, seeing equals knowledge, to observe is to identify. In ‘Arnold Layne’, seeing is about three times as powerful as knowing. A person with similar character traits would recognise those in another. The Who’s ‘Pictures of Lily’, recorded and released in April, shares ‘Arnold Layne’’s shrill hysteria and rising *cadenza*. In ‘Pictures of Lily’, the displaced object of eroticism was a racy photo of music hall star Lillie Langtry. This, then, is transgressive pop, an early expression of the gender-blurring subtexts of glam rock. Blues scholar John Olivar notes a lyrical variation in ‘Arnold Layne’ culled from ‘Prove It On Me Blues’ (a 1928 song about a cross-dressing woman) by Ma Rainey and her Tub Jug Washboard Band, which Syd found among Mike Leonard’s seventy-eights.

‘Whose side are you on?’ asks Barrett. The song’s viewpoint is expressed through from the perspective of a condemnatory society, though Barrett’s subtle critique of middle-class England exposed corruption beneath its outward appearances. Suburban burgher Layne stands at the mirror and admires himself clad in stolen knickers. Are Barrett’s lyrical inquisitions aimed at Layne or those who seek to judge him? There is an ambiguous displacement of the first-person point of view. As Guy de Maupassant noted, ‘He could not see the whole of himself and only got a distorted view.’

Few outside the underground paused to reflect on such subtexts. For teenagers in pirate radio land, ‘Arnold Layne’ was good fun, unusual and startling. Barrett’s oblique lines and droning voice rising into the driving chorus sent shivers up pop audiences’ spines. Syd had a marvellous pop touch.

Barrett’s crushed velvet singing voice was his secret weapon, its lower reaches resonating with guttural reverb. Barrett flattened his voice, sending emotional overtones cascading over his *précis* journalistic delivery. Like Nico of the Velvet Underground, Barrett made best use of his voice singing in minor keys, with sound not unlike the antiphonal

chanting of monks. His flattened lilt and quavers had a distinct, even Fenland drone.

His attempt to sing American English for ‘Lucy Leave’ illustrated what a lost cause that was, for Barrett’s remains a singularly English voice. His posh, enunciated singing betrayed his middle-class origins. Rounded vowels rolled in pleasing cadence. The mock cockney of Mick Jagger was not for him. Barrett’s accent was pure county diction; intricate interactions between falling tone and glottal stop, his keening voice suffused with the shrill cadence of the Fen.

‘Arnold Layne’ marked a turning point – with the Kinks’ ‘Well Respected Man’ and ‘Dedicated Follower of Fashion’, the first thoroughly English pop songs. Poet Pete Brown was inspired by ‘Arnold Layne’ to write ‘White Room’ for Cream, another lyric with distinctly English narrative slant. ‘With John Lennon and Ray Davies, Syd Barrett was one of the first English songwriters,’ notes Brown. ‘They looked at English subjects and phenomena, and didn’t use overtly American styles. American blues and R&B lyrical content influenced them. Inspiring, because blues is a personal form. People have always made their own blues, from Robert Johnson to Peter Green. Once you heard and understood you too could do something with that, there was the liberation. You could stretch blues to include your own environment. Nobody had looked at that before Lennon and Barrett. Everyone else was working in American idioms, albeit with flashes of Britishness. “Arnold Layne” had nothing to do with blues, though somewhere behind is a lyrical liberation from knowing about blues. The Kinks started as your basic R&B band until they started doing English subjects. I started liking the Kinks when they did “Waterloo Sunset”. “Strawberry Fields”/ “Penny Lane” was an important record as well. Barrett I felt closer to because his music made more of an impression on me.’ Within the year, ‘Arnold Layne’ was anthologised in *Writing in England Today* on the basis of its outstanding lyrical skill.

The single had help from a Denmark Street sharpie whom Blackhill paid a couple of hundred quid to boost its chart position. Radio Caroline admitted charging £100 a week for sixty plays. Caroline argued that EMI, Philips, Decca and Pye spent thousands every year on Radio

Luxembourg to present shows built round their own records. Money, rather than merit, ruled the waves.

Reviews were good, if perfunctory, with *NME* observing: 'An unusual song, but not psychedelic. Offbeat weird lyrics, great organ work, and spine-tingling build. The flip side, "Candy" has a jaunty beat, fuzz guitar, with strange oscillating chanting more like psychedelia.'

In *Melody Maker,* Nick Jones reviewed 'Arnold Layne' as 'an amusing and colourful story about a guy who got himself put inside whilst dreaming of the birds and the bees. Without a doubt, a very good disc. Interesting to see how the Floyd were going to fare with having to make a commercial single, but with their electronic sound, which takes an unexpected twist, they have made a good single. Pink Floyd represents a new form of music on the English pop scene. So let's hope the English are broad-minded enough to accept it with open arms.'

Not all were. Pete Murray of television's *Juke Box Jury* denounced 'Arnold Layne' as 'prurient'. Waters bristled. 'He said we were a con. He thought it was just contrived rubbish to meet some unhealthy demand.' Barrett shrugged off the controversy, '"Arnold Layne" is nothing but a pop record. It wasn't intended to represent anything in particular.'

When Nick Jones showed up at Earlham Road one morning, Syd tumbled from bed and donned his socks as Lindsay materialised at the door with coffee. Jones joked, 'Syd, why did you write such a dirty, filthy, immoral and degrading song as "Arnold Layne"?' as he peeked around the small attic room looking for incriminating signs of cross dressing.

Barrett blinked and said softly, 'Arnold Layne just happens to dig dressing up in women's clothing. A lot of people do, so let's face up to reality. About the only lyric anybody could object to is the bit about, "It takes two to know," and there's nothing smutty about that! But then if more people like them dislike us, more people like the underground lot are going to dig us, so we hope they'll cancel each other out.'

The underground hated seeing 'their' band go pop, with all its implied triviality and disposability. At UFO discontented rumbles rose. 'See the Pink Floyd go pop!' trumpeted a 10 March advert for UFO. There, assembled ravers got an advance screening of the 'Arnold Layne' promo clip. 'At UFO,' Waters told *Rave* magazine, 'people are so blasé, bored to

death with “Arnold Layne” because it’s become a pop song. In other clubs, this song is the only song they know and enjoy. Some don’t like the song because they think it’s a smutty idea for a man to run around pinching clothes from washing lines. We think it’s fun!’

Underground cliques derided ‘Arnold Layne’ as a sell-out of the band’s improvisational ethos, a commercial sop for money and fame. The ousting of Joe Boyd from his producer’s chair was viewed with contempt. Promo films, EMI, and singles had nothing to do with awareness that psychedelics had opened up. The legend ‘Pink Finks!’ was scrawled on UFO’s toilet wall.

True believers in the underground to the end, the group Brothers Grimm stood by the stage shouting ‘sell-outs!’ at Pink Floyd. Syd was taken aback, disturbed because maybe they were right – his first disenchantment. A review by Hoppy in *International Times* titled *Pink Floyd versus Psychedelia*, read: ‘Publicists, agents and recording executives play out games attempting to prove the Pink Floyd haven’t got much connection with anything. A nice, clean, music-for-the-family image.’ Quite a contrast from ‘blasted, astronomic hippy rebels’, as *Melody Maker* dubbed them.

‘What bothered me was the complete shift in music made at UFO versus music made at EMI,’ says Wynne-Willson. ‘I would have said Syd was under pressure from Roger, though I don’t know to what extent EMI applied pressure directly to him. I was aghast at “Arnold Layne”. It took me by surprise. Anybody who hung around UFO would have chosen “Interstellar Overdrive” as a first record if one were to be made. I’m sure that must have given Syd a hard time. Later he became fed up with having to play “Arnold Layne” and “See Emily Play” at gigs, little pop ditties.’

No one interferes with us when we’re in the studio,’ insisted Waters. ‘They just leave us, more or less, alone to get on with what we want.’

Syd wrote commercial songs and hook-filled potential singles with no qualms. He wanted to be a pop star. As main songwriter, writing saleable pop songs was a useful way of condensing nebulous imaginings into concise imagery. Mason noted, ‘Syd was perfectly capable of assembling a track as a record, rather than a fifteen-minute piece. We were not trying to curb him in at all. He understood the medium and just got on with it.’

‘Syd’s strongest compositions were bouncy, jolly, quirky melodies with absurdist, amusing lyrics,’ observes David Gale. ‘Syd’s music was different from the latter Floyd’s music – anthemic, dirge-like, or protracted.’

In a marked dichotomy between songs and extended freak-outs, Barrett’s songs of innocence and bewildered experience grabbed chord structures from radio pop and wove melodies under odd rhyme schemes. Alternatively, ‘Interstellar Overdrive’ drew from bebop’s doomed search for transcendence. Coltrane’s euphoria; Charlie Parker’s freedom. Gale proposes, ‘Syd’s early songs were inspired by cannabis, and longer pieces, where he and Waters and Wright started hacking vast oceanic sound, were LSD-inspired. “The Scarecrow”, for example, was more a jolly cannabis song. The meandering style they pioneered grew from LSD, music to be contemplated at great length.’

Radio London banned ‘Arnold Layne’ outright for its allusions to transvestism and knicker theft. Strangely, the staid BBC gave ‘Arnold Layne’ its fair share of spins. Radio Caroline, having not received enough payola money, failed to give the song any more than an occasional airing. Still, ‘Arnold Layne’ reached Number 29 on their ‘Caroline Countdown of Sound’ chart. The single went to Number 20 in the UK pop charts on 22 April – the first underground single to break into the mainstream. This had everything to do with Syd’s ear for melody. Rick Wright took the ban to heart, complaining, ‘The record was banned, not because of the lyrics. There’s nothing there you can object to. They’re against us as a group and against what we stand for.’ What they stood for was unclear at this point – pop success, experiments in sound and light, or advertising hoarding for underground consciousness?

‘Only a business-like commercial insult anyway,’ said Syd, masking his growing disenchantment. ‘It doesn’t affect us personally. The music is all coming straight out of our heads and not too far out to understand. If we play well onstage most people understand what we play isn’t just a noise. Most audiences respond to a good set.’

‘We can’t think what Radio London are so perturbed about,’ observed Waters. ‘A song about a clothes fetishist who’s a bit kinked. A simple, straightforward song about one human predicament. If we can’t write and

sing songs about various forms of human predicament then we might as well not be in the business.'

The British pop scene was singles-driven – a band was only as good as their last hit. Bookings, TV appearances and press coverage all depended on the charts. The group, chasing pop fame, engaged in inane photo shoots, with leaping and leg kicks, outside EMI's Manchester House. They were photographed 'playing' on a small stage with instruments unplugged, Barrett wore the ugliest shirt ever made, while the others fared little better in off-the-peg satin shirts, as they morphed from mod students to pop hopefuls. Fresh-faced and naïve, by the year's end they would be hardened men by comparison.

Unable to get the live sound on tape, Pink Floyd had another go at recording 'Interstellar Overdrive' on 16 March. Unreleased until 2007, take six failed to compress their live version into five minutes. Barrett plays watery, raw and sloppy lead guitar with excess echo. Ping-ponging, Syd's guitar frantically fails to bind rhythm to melody. Although the Farfisa still had its piercing treble, Wright soon settled into more muted style, removing Oboe and Piccolo voice tabs, pulling stops out, pushing sustained Binson echoes for complex harmonic decay. As they dropped into the radical space section, their ensemble playing improved a great deal. Barrett samples his Esquire on the Binson and sinks fathoms deep in cavernous echo, bringing up swell while Waters ominously clicks his Rickenbacker below the bridge.

After a canteen break, they recorded 'Flaming' in one glorious take, with a single vocal overdub. Syd outlines his Pan-inspired vision. Though its lilting upward melodic swings recall Love's 'She Comes in Colours', the melody bears a passing resemblance to the children's rhyme 'Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star'; a glistening collation looking to the 19th century. Barrett drew from interpolated fairytales, ballads, and rhymes. Tying in with English Romantic-era poetry, one line rings as an inversion of Percy Shelley's '*howling through the darkened sky*'.

'Flaming' evokes childlike hide-and-seek, though the subtext is altogether more adult. Syd's lyric about dozing in the dew recalled 'The Foggy Dew', a bawdy 18th-century broadside ballad from the *Child Ballads* popularised by Shirley Collins and the Dubliners at the

Cambridge Folk Festival, and Pete Seeger on his 1962 album *American Favorite Ballads, Vol 5*.

The shimmering intro to 'Flaming' evokes a hypnagogic sleep suspended between dreams and waking. The opening avant-garde sound picture drew from ambient intro to 'Virgin Forest' by the Fugs, though more pointedly from AMM's 'Later During a Flaming Riviera Sunset', from which 'Flaming' draws its title and squalling tension.

'If you listen to "Later" there are parts much like the introduction on "Flaming",' observed Keith Rowe. 'They do this uncharacteristic, almost ambient sound, AMM-like, and then it goes into the rhythm. What Syd does is take something from AMM or myself and he was inspired. It gave him confidence to do something different.'

Smith and Bown routed the intro through EMI's echo chamber, and custom EMT reverb plates provided spacious lustre. A six-hundred-pound box with thin steel squares suspended by tension bolts, pickups on either side picked up shimmering metallic reverberation. Bown was fond of EMT plate reverb used in conjunction with echo chambers on *Piper* sessions. Waters plays slide whistle, while Wright's Mixolydian solo, rising through octaves, adding Lowrey DSO Organ harpsichord presets at the end. Smith and Bown used ADT for the phasing effect cast over keyboards and vocals, Wright trails to the highest notes on the studio's Steinway Vertegrand Grand Piano, its lacquered hammers producing a bright sound. Mason pounds his drums in staccato, like a hammer striking nails into wood, as shimmering cymbals wash fanfares over the track. Wind-up toys and bells merge with whooshing and whistling from Waters to round out the mix.

Barrett plays a solo in a raga-like scale. In stereo, Syd's artificial double-tracked voice shadows his original vocal far enough out of phase to produce a disorienting effect, with touch of flanging. Waters plays a folk-bass pattern under Wright's ornamental sustained chords. Barrett's pastiche of a High Church chant in the instrumental interval casts sidelong notes at Wright's scale in liturgical volley.

Syd sings of loneliness in the clouds, assuming an earthbound incarnation as Pan, the true Piper at the Gates of Dawn. The satyr draws up the dawn in spidery tendrils, surging melody heralding the day. The flaming lysergic dawn casts night away in luminous rays, the vocal's lush

harmonics condensing like droplets on grass blades, dissolving skyward into the ether. (Echoed in the chorus of 'Shine on You Crazy Diamond'). 'Flaming' is a nature elegy, the fullest expression of Syd's vision.

Two days later, Pink Floyd recorded 'The Gnome' in one sublime take, with overdubs. Wright hit metal bars on a vibraphone for resonant *vibrato*. As close to pure nursery rhyme as Barrett wrote, it was an ode to a gnome by the name of grimble grumble. A grimble being a gnome in Old English, though in East Anglia, 'grimble' and 'grumble' means to 'begrime', or to smear or soil with dirt. Syd percolates with amusement as he sings in an exaggerated Celtic burr, all rolling r's that couldn't be farther from East Anglia.

In folklore, gnomes were earth spirits a foot tall with blue and green suits, who did household tasks when no one was looking. In *The Little Grey Men*, fearsome Giant Grum lives in Crow Wood, gnome Baldmoney wears a 'short coat and waistcoat of mouse skin with a strip of snakeskin round the middle'.

'The Gnome' recalls Tolkien's Tom Bombadil, mysterious, like Syd. In the first book of *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy, Hobbits caught by Old Man Willow were rescued by a strange man in colourful clothes, singing nonsense nursery rhymes. 'He had a blue coat and a long brown beard; his eyes were blue and bright, and his face was red as a ripe apple, but creased into a hundred wrinkles of laughter…'

Syd is double-tracked singing a hair above a whisper, as he strummed a reverberant 12-string acoustic guitar, urging the listener to look at the sky and river, a line which echoed, '*Just as you feel when you look on the river and sky*,' by Walt Whitman in *Leaves of Grass*. Smith and Bown set Syd at the back of Studio Three by the window, with a Neumann U48 Cardioid Microphone and compression set to capture every nuance. When he sings '*hoo-ray*', or rather, '*oom-ray*' – pig Latin for 'room' – Wright harmonises as they leap from octave to octave in relay.

Syd holds a strange note between notes. Not out of tune in the conventional sense, he repeats the device in 'Late Night' and 'Chapter 24', a polyphonic quality. Transcending the faux-Eastern affectations found elsewhere on *Piper*, droning notes resonate until a third complementary note rises, shimmering like a Fenland mirage. In *Electric*

Folk, Britta Sweers notes that electric folk singers' hints of polyphonic singing are sourced from folk songs such as 'Tam Lin'.

Wright overdubbed a Schiedmayer Celeste – a small piano that made sounds redolent of chamber music with ringing sonority, found tucked under the stairs in Studio Two, the oldest instrument at Abbey Road. The group raided the studio's cache whenever they needed exotica – wind-up wind machine, clockwork toy, tin whistle or Asian gong.

A litmus test for Pink Floyd fans, 'The Gnome' is oft cited as proof of Syd's 'mediocre' talent at lyrics and guitar by rabid Waters and Gilmour fans. For better and often worse, Barrett launched a flood of imitators in the subset known as 'toy town psych'. Almost two hundred singles worth of magic roundabouts, fairies and enough candyfloss metaphors to sink a carousel followed in its wake. Barrett's nursery rhymes and child-like singing escape the often gruesome tweeness of his imitators by a hair. Barrett achieves this by not singing tongue-in-cheek, but instead with genuine naïvety and innocence. There lay the wonder and worry in Barrett's worldview.

The group were disciplined and hardworking, often coming into the studio at two-thirty in the afternoon, working through until 6:30pm, taking dinner in the canteen, then back to work from 7:30pm until midnight. Often, the first session was dedicated to recording basic tracks. At the canteen, over tea and hot butties, they discussed what worked or what didn't, sat among London Philharmonic string players, the likes of pop star Cilla Black, or odd white-coated technical engineers. Returning to Studio Three, the second session was devoted to overdubs, rough mixes, or making a fresh start.

On 20 March, Pink Floyd recorded Roger Waters's 'Take Up Thy Stethoscope and Walk'. Representative of UFO freak-outs, Waters's couplets cascaded like a migraine. (In the Bible, John 5:8, Jesus says, 'Take up thy bed, and walk.') A high-intensity recording, this is the group doing their level best to display their live prowess. Save for a wild Barrett guitar interval (recorded, unusually, on Fender Stratocaster) and Mason's impressive pounding pagan drums, 'Stethoscope' is a period piece.

Nick Mason echoes Elvin Jones's drumming on John Coltrane Quartet's 'Om', banging tympani for bottom heavy resonance. Barrett's

playing ranges from extreme blues string bends to rapid-fire, skittering Morse-code-like blips, controlling echo feedback from his volume knob. Barrett had fresh memories of the Jeff Beck Group two weeks before at the Saville Theatre, where Beck used volume and tone controls for a wah pedal effect.

To cover a crude edit at 2:35, Smith used phasing. Music journalist James Rotondi called Syd '…an idea machine stippling harmolodically on "Take Up Thy Stethoscope and Walk", morphing rhythm three or four times within a single sixteen-bar groove, only to shift the improvisation into abstract space'.

The freak-out soloing is particularly useful in Rick's hands, with sustained, heavy tremolo Combo Duo Organ, and a characteristic cyclical bass riff by Waters. Again, a Yardbirds-style accelerating riff drives to the track to a close. The song also owes more than a passing nod to Love's 'Revelation', another extended jam where everyone solos: guitar, bass, organ, weird noises.

The next afternoon, work began on 'Pow R. Toc H.', another collective composition aimed at capturing the group's live sound. Mason's compressed drums pound like tympani, with bottom-heavy detonation via Bown's limiters. Performed throughout the year, 'Pow R. Toc H.' and 'Interstellar Overdrive' formed the Floyd's live frontline attack.

'Pow R. Toc H.' drew its title in part from 'Toc H' huts where soldiers in World War One gathered between breaks in fighting. Pink Floyd insert pauses for harmony amid battlefront discord. The classic Syd three-semitone reappears here in the drop from G minor to E minor. The frantic overdriven improvisation shifts to gently descending melodic lines, with Waters walking his bass line and Wright playing brittle single-note melodies on piano in Dorian mode, inverting 'So What' by Bill Evans in Miles Davis's classic quintet. 'Using echo repeat to play triplets in a 4/4 rhythm,' Waters explained, 'on "Pow R. Toc H." with tapping of microphone. Simple devices, but effective.'

A pointer to the band's later work, the piece survived Syd's departure as 'The Pink Jungle' in the 1969 *The Man and the Journey* suite. Recalling Rousseau's jungle scenes, Waters and Barrett mimic shrieking

monkeys with shameless aplomb. Mason shines with a rabid demonstration of swing syncopation.

'Pow R. Toc H.' featured Syd and Roger's vocal effects mimicking steam-train whistles, before a salvo of Fenland animal noises and croaking frogs recall the Fen Causeway in summer torpor. Waters was a driving force in developing these sound effects, even neighing like a horse. Andrew King watched with some dismay as he felt that the band were becoming too far removed from Barrett's style. Rife with sound effects, unlike the Beatles, who used found sounds from the formidable tape library, Pink Floyd often improvised their own. Mason said, 'How "Pow R. Toc H." started was just one geezer would go to the microphone and go, "ba-boom-chi-chi, ba-boom-chi-chi" and everyone picked up on it. Then the drums picked up and that was more or less that.'

Syd added lead guitar overdubs after a one-hour rest. His playing spotty, Barrett hits offbeat notes and comes in too soon. Clearly not po-faced, Syd stifles a laugh at 2:53. Smith and Bown had trouble, moving faders erratically. At the final rave-up, Syd closes with riveting string bends.

After the session, Pink Floyd were invited into Studio Two to watch the Beatles work at 11:00pm. The Beatles, mixing 'Lovely Rita', listened to playbacks in silence. The Floyd watched from the control room with George Martin at the desk. With half-hearted hellos all around, the visit proved awkward, with Mason comparing the visit to meeting the Royal Family. Wright recalled, 'John Lennon was extremely unfriendly, Paul McCartney on the other hand showed interest.' Lennon had reason to be unfriendly. He had mistaken LSD for amphetamine and was tripping. After the Floyd left, Martin took Lennon to the studio roof for a breather and left him there to look at stars, quite unaware of his altered state.

Jenner was certain the Floyd influenced the Beatles as they recorded down the corridor. McCartney referenced Syd with his rare lead guitar solo on 'Good Morning Good Morning', recorded a week later through Fender Esquire and Selmer amp.

On 22 March, Pink Floyd recorded 'The Scarecrow' in one splendid take, the third and final song in the pastoral suite. Influenced in construction by the Rolling Stones' 'Lady Jane', 'The Scarecrow' opens with an imitation of horses' hooves cantering across the deserted back

roads of the Fen Causeway, which Mason created on the spot using wooden blocks and spoons tapped on metal cup. Wright imitated reedy medieval shawm on his organ's oboe voice tabs. In the coda, an acoustic, finger-picked traditional folk pattern is shadowed by Wright's plaintive flute. Cello or bowed bass rounds out the coda in swaying time, like Morris Dancers in a harvest sunset.

Syd might have been stirred by a poem used as lettering exercise to draw a scarecrow in art classes for children at Morley Memorial School: 'A scarecrow stood in a field one day, stuffed with straw, stuffed with hay.'

Waters plays Rickenbacker bass with a violin bow, Wright a needling Farfisa solo recalling Country Joe & the Fish's 'The Masked Marauder'. Against a bare chord backdrop, Barrett intones in waltz time about a scarecrow found in barley fields outside Cambridge.

'The Scarecrow' was prophetic, Syd's alter ego or *doppelgänger*. Barrett foreshadowed his subsequent mental exile using poetic metaphor. His first self-portrait in song, though it is doubtful that this was consciously contrived to be so. The scarecrow, alive yet inert, stands motionless, beset by birds and mice. Barrett tells us that the scarecrow is resigned to his fate. Birds pick the straw this shadow Syd is made of, though. Like a reflection in a mirror, a simulacrum, the illusion seems real, as in Arnold's distorted view. This illusory double illustrates first signs of Barrett's fragmenting self, and Syd makes the connection between himself and his double explicit.

Like Pete Townshend, Barrett carried rhythm and lead guitar roles at once. Allowing greater latitude to bend and experiment with rhythm, maintaining steady tempo could be an onerous chore. The rhythm guitarist in a standard four-piece rock band gave the lead player a sounding board to test ideas, keep steady time, and alleviate reproducing complicated guitar parts live. Pink Floyd's solution was to let organ and bass create a melodic base, which Barrett could fill in on when needed.

Onstage riffs and phrases were inserted wholesale into albums. Waters's repeating bass motif in the central space jam in 'Interstellar Overdrive' segued into 'Let There Be More Light' on 1968's *A Saucerful of Secrets*. The shift toward tonality, pulse and constancy had much to do with Waters, Mason, and Wright. Barrett sought another exegesis

altogether, to free guitar from the tyranny of chords and notes, reconcile the gestural with the melodic, and merge his synaesthetic impulses. Syd avoided blues clichés for an intricate web of echo-laden *glissandi*, spitfire *arpeggios* and short, punchy phrasing. At his peak, Barrett experimented with tonality, and explored microtones to their essence. LSD initially augmented his search. In his exploratory improvisations, Barrett asks what tonality is.

At EMI headquarters in Manchester Square, executives Sidney Arthur Beecher-Stevens, Ron White and Roy Featherstone presented their latest pop sensations to the mainstream media. Syd's expression, as Andrew King's hand hovered over the contract, was unsmiling; as though the bulb flash awoke the notion that he had signed away his own creativity. Drafted on 28 February, EMI introduced Pink Floyd as, 'Musical spokesmen for a new movement which involves experimentation in all the arts, including music.' The press release also made an extraordinary denial, declaring, 'The Pink Floyd does not know what people mean by psychedelic pop and are not trying to create hallucinatory effects on audiences.' The term 'psychedelic' carried sufficient negative cachet in mainstream media to cause alarm in EMI's press office.

Journalist Robert Pitman excoriated Pink Floyd in his 'In My Opinion' column in the right-wing *Daily Express*, feeding growing hysteria about the underground. 'The Pink Floyd reproduces the sound equivalent of LSD visions, acclaimed by promoters and fans as "psychedelic". It has taken part in curious way-out events, simulating drug ecstasies, known as "freak-outs", in which girls writhe and shriek, and young men roll naked in paint or jelly. The Pink Floyd players dislike notoriety. They say, "Our attitude to freak-outs is we would not play at one again unless they paid us three times our normal fee." Young men of principle.' Waters, infuriated, took the article as a personal affront, complaining of 'professional knockers in the press'.

At a gig in Malvern, they were banned from using the logo, 'It's a freak-out, it's a psychedelic happening,' by hysterical staff. Designed to describe an experience, 'psychedelic' became a product bound for market, with an expiration date. Barrett affected unconcern, stating,

‘People can call it anything they like, we don’t like labels to be stuck on things. As long as they listen, I don’t object.’

The group signed for a £5,000 advance over five years. What Waters later called ‘a bloody stupid deal’. Young, ambitious and inexperienced, Pink Floyd rushed off to the Birdcage in Portsmouth. Like a brilliant plumed peacock, they flew into the cage of commerce of their own accord. The £5,000 advance against future royalties seemed a fortune. Had they read the fine print, the advance was a no-interest loan from EMI. The terms were pitiful and were subsequently renegotiated for even less money, when an eight percent royalty was amended to five percent in exchange for unlimited studio time. The first flush was sweet, one concession to grandeur being Blackhill’s purchase of a grand old Bentley automobile for £1,000.

‘The others were happy making the money and happy taking the money,’ says Wynne-Willson. ‘And I don’t know if that was their goal from the start, though it became the focus. Not to say Syd didn’t enjoy spending money, he spent it more recklessly than the others did. Not that there were great amounts around, actually very small quantities. With the record contract came a decided shift in atmosphere. It most certainly wasn’t an underground scene then.’

The bulk of EMI’s advance money went to pay delinquent hire purchase accounts, payouts to promo men and bookers, and myriad expenses. Syd blew his quotient on guitars, clothes and records. ‘I splashed out a couple of hundred on a new guitar.’ He bought a proper Telecaster with white ash body, rosewood neck, and dual pickups. The white Tele had custom wiring for pickups Syd modified, out of phase, for intense sustain – a trick culled from Peter Green’s ‘The Supernatural’. Syd played the Telecaster onstage, in the studio, and pretended to strum it on *Top of the Pops*.

Alan di Perna notes, ‘When Telecaster neck pickup comes into play, easy to distinguish from an Esquire. A much warmer tone, quite bassy. In combination with bridge pickup makes for a full, round sound, though still with bite and definition.’

On 3 April, Pink Floyd grandly arrived at the BBC Playhouse Theatre in the Bentley. They appeared on the radio pop show *Monday, Monday* performing their upcoming single live. The film clip for ‘Arnold Layne’

was to be screened on the BBC's *Top of the Pops* the next day, but was pulled when the song dropped down the chart.

Pink Floyd then flew to Belfast, where fans lost their collective minds. In the charts, with their faces in teen pop magazine *Fabulous*, the band faced sobbing screamers who called for 'Syd!' and 'Rick!'

They flew back to London, drove to a gig in Herefordshire, before playing the 'All Night Lightshow Continuum' at the Roundhouse. Another 10:00pm-to-dawn rave, with UFO rivals the Flies, Electric Poets (aka Soft Machine), dancers, the ubiquitous Simon and Marijke from Karma, films and lights. Short on gear, Pink Floyd borrowed from the Flies' set-up, elements of which they neglected to return or damaged, furthering the enmity between rival bands. Miles told Jonathon Green: 'The Flies first drew attention to themselves at UFO standing at the stage when the Pink Floyd were on, yelling and screaming abuse at them, "Sell outs!"' Underground band Sam Gopal Dream had Sam Gopal pattering away on amplified tablas, with Mike Hutchinson improvising Indian music with jazz and blues thrown over. Pete Sears, inspired after seeing Pink Floyd at the Marquee, left Les Fleur de Lys and joined Sam Gopal on organ.

Between uncomfortable drives on the motorway with four or five crammed into the Bentley or a Transit van to endless provincial gigs where audiences were indifferent or outright hostile, Pink Floyd toiled away on their debut. Sleep was the first victim of fame. Anywhere one could rest their head was their bed, whether plane seat or bumping heads in the van down narrow winding roads in the dark. At twenty, Barrett had energy to spare and could stay up for forty-eight hours at a stretch, though telltale dark circles under his eyes testify to sleep deprivation, and prodigious dope smoking.

EMI's press release for 'Arnold Layne' declared that Barrett favoured 'fairy stories, painting, songwriting and walking around London, whilst disliking having no time for reading fairy stories'. Already, a lack of time was a concern for Barrett. Wrenched from his laidback world, Syd was thrust into high-paced pop charade, with no structure around him, and nothing to relate his newfound fame to.

'Syd was a handsome boy, beautiful, true flower power,' recalled Jenner. 'In outrageous gear, with this permanent that cost £20, Syd

looked like a beautiful woman, all this Thea Porter stuff. He had a lovely girlfriend, Lindsay, spitting image of Syd.' Joe Boyd says, 'My impressions were of his clothes. Tight velvet trousers, military jackets, curled hair, handsome and attractive. Syd had a bandanna around his neck, knotted like a cravat. You got the feeling girls would adore him, which they did.'

'Syd and Lindsay – well, I would say Lindsay was more in tune with him than he was with her,' observed Wynne-Willson. 'Finely tuned to Syd, Lindsay was not a pretty groupie, seriously involved with him and clearly so.' In tune with Syd as few others were, they had discussions without words, and took it for granted that those around them picked it up.

As Pink Floyd became famous, Syd and Lindsay moved into a new social scene centred on the King's Road and Cromwell Road. They drifted from the academic orbit of the London Free School and Blackhill. Newfound admirers whispered enticements, catered to his every whim, offered him every excess. Mystical acidheads cooked up a plan for a new world dawning, quick to support their soothsaying with generous drug doses. 'Syd's magnetic character did attract a lot of people to him, who were frankly not his equal in any way at all and did rather provide him with lots of drugs,' Gilmour recalled.

'Syd was truly a beautiful person, a lovely guy,' John Marsh declared. 'He had a creative brain, a way of looking at things that was genuinely revolutionary and different.

Maldwyn Thomas, a mod drawn into the psychedelic underground, recalled the residents: 'A Cambridge lot, Cambridge freaks. Duggie Fields painted abstracts in tiny little dots, rather like Seurat. Cromwell was Syd's place, the central figure there. "Going down to 101, man?" "Think I will."'

People came creeping out of the woodwork to tell Syd he should not play into the pop-star system. That pop was a con – bought, sold and discarded. That his music was mystical, the soundtrack to an egalitarian life, where material possessions were redundant. Part of an Aquarian New Age where clocks stopped, the Thames changed course and if everyone loved one another, then no error was made, and great good fortune followed. When he walked into UFO, with lights and sounds

cascading around his head, appreciative eyes fell on him, urging him on. Syd returned this confidence with shining performances, where audiences watched transfixed as he coaxed mercurial sounds from his Esquire. Syd Barrett had star power.

Interested in all creative arts, Syd was easygoing and genial, his temperament bright and serene. The reticence behind his good humour appealed to freaks asking him the meaning of life. His manners, faultless diction, county schooling and aloof air drew in the impressionable. One on one, Barrett's charisma manifested in quiet intensity; like a hovering orb, the quieter he was the more intense his pull. Syd was young, experimental to the point of recklessness, trusting and good-hearted. Gifted with inexhaustible talents, Syd had a rare ability to act on his ideas, bringing them to life repeatedly. Intuitive and spontaneous, though disciplined in his own scattered way, Syd had energy and drive.

Conversations ran into morning. Barrett was more than receptive, wide open to new ideas. Being so young, Syd had not developed a filter to discern between truth and purple smoke. Hash blurred lines and acid erased them. New acquaintances were plentiful, though few became friends. Barrett told a *Disc Music & Echo* reporter he was 'a gypsy at heart' and enjoyed talking to people. 'I find everyone has something of interest to say.'

Learning new things from everyone he came across – Syd craved intellectual stimulus. Barrett became well known underground for his genuine curiosity. In his sunny phase, Syd delighted in keeping up-to-date about the latest news (and gossip) from the underground. He was also susceptible to the inveiglements of hipsters, who told him music was religious craft, a hum at the end of the universe it was wise to heed. In the underground, heightened expectations aimed towards a spiritual and metaphysical level. Syd was happy being a bohemian, like the romanticised *poètes maudits*. Despite his aesthetic extravagances, building for tomorrow did not figure. Barrett lived in the moment, for the moment.

No longer an unknown Beat musician from Cambridge's union cellars, his silver guitar underpinned his image as the king of an underground Albion, the Esquire his Excalibur. Barrett envisaged a role beyond that of a pop star – blending Pan, Doctor Strange, and

Moonchild. A feedback loop developed between band and audience, light shining onto the group, shining back at the audience through Syd's silver discs. In magic, mirrors were sewn onto clothing to repel negative energy. Whether or not Syd was aware, his intuitive whims resonated with symbols that represented the moon, dreams and mystery.

'I ran into Syd outside the flat at Earlham Street, where he was living with Lindsay,' says Joe Boyd. 'A warm day, I saw him sitting on the kerb with a bunch of people, looking very stoned. Lindsay, whom I always liked and was always keen on, said to me, "Wow, Syd's taking acid every day, just incredible how much he's taking." Syd took a great deal of drugs. People were aware of the strength of the acid experience. Taking it once, I couldn't imagine taking it every day. Beyond my comprehension how people could want to do that. Obvious to me if you did it every day, you were jeopardising wires holding everything together in your mind.'

Queried about LSD, Barrett said, 'It was all related to living in London. I was lucky enough, I've always thought of going back to a place where you can drink tea and sit on the carpet. I've been fortunate enough to do that. All that time, you've just reminded me of it. I thought it was good fun.'

'At Earlham Street, there was a fair amount of LSD consumed,' says Wynne-Willson, 'but not a disturbing quantity. I don't know about Cromwell Road, and how much he was taking there.'

In keeping with his rising fame, Syd and Lindsay took up residence at 101 Cromwell Road. Jenny Lesmoir-Gordon says, 'We were at Cromwell Road for two years and then went to Lebanon in April, so Syd and Lindsay had our old room.'

'Cromwell Road does seem to get a bad press,' observes Jenny Spires. '[It] wasn't quite the dive it's made out to be, before whoever moved in at the end.'

Jenny stayed in the top flat for a while, before moving on to Anthony Stern's flat in Battersea. In the spring, Lindsay moved into the small box room and after a while, Syd came there too. Two architectural students lived on the bottom floor and Duggie, Jock and Hester lived upstairs. When Sue finished with Chris Case and came back to London, she got together with Jock upstairs. Hester moved out and later married Russell Page. Nigel and Jenny lived on the first floor with Chris Case.

Spires says, ‘I had moved on and was staying in Battersea, but visited often. There were never any freaky people living there at this time. This may have happened after Jock and Sue left for Beaufort Street and Syd and Lindsay moved down into Nigel and Jenny’s room for a while.’

At Cromwell, Syd relaxed with friends drawn from outside Cambridge circles, like Duggie Fields and Mick Rock. Fields recalled Syd had a wicked sense of humour, and an ego. Syd and Mick listened to Charlie Parker albums, or wandered around Hyde Park stoned. Often Syd sat on Duggie’s floor and read his Marvel comic books. Fields covered one bedroom wall, top to bottom, with comics, which everyone tended to borrow and never return. In *Strange Tales*, Doctor Stephen Strange was the master of the mystic arts, part of the persona Syd adopted; sorcerer on the scene. Fields was impressed when Syd introduced him to Aleister Crowley’s *Moonchild* and the *I Ching*. Barrett in turn delved into Duggie’s *Amazing Stories* and sci-fi digests.

A pair of Jenner’s litter of kittens were soon constantly underfoot at Cromwell Road, mewling and shitting on landings. The kittens were dubbed ‘Pink’ and ‘Floyd’ and said to have had acid dropped in their saucer of milk. Rubbish and scattered empty milk bottles made for a grotty atmosphere, none of which anyone paid any mind to, as they swanned in and out the flat at all hours in full King’s Road finery. Barrett complained, ‘We weren’t living in luxurious places with luxurious things around us. I would always advocate that sort of thing, the luxurious life.’

Nigel and Jenny had been key elements of life at Cromwell Road. In their absence, the atmosphere changed. A place where alternative modes of inquiry held sway, the house welled with drug-fuelled mysticism, with much talk about the Holy Grail and LSD as sacrament with the potential to change the world. John Esam and George Andrews, after all, were contributors to the *Psychedelic Review*. Hardcore heads in the flat tended to view Barrett as naïve. As his star rose, the levels of petty jealousy also increased. Syd encountered malcontents who criticised his seeming lack of authenticity and half-hearted embrace of the underground.

For a while, Syd was the calm eye of the underground storm. As a sudden surge in touring and recording caught up with him, he was drawn into the relentless rounds of socialising at Cromwell on his days off. He returned from gigs, opened the door and climbed the stairs to a flat full of

strangers. Everyone knew he was Syd Barrett, UFO star. Strumming a guitar on the floor, seated on a carpet, sipping tea, Barrett was regaled with hazy stoned philosophising and pseudo-mysticism. Curious and inquisitive, Syd listened with half-cocked ear to rambling treatises on philosophy, science, religion, and metaphysics while strumming his guitar. Skimming the surface, the broader the area was the more it appealed. Barrett seemed wary of delving too deeply below this surface. The illusory clarity of LSD was often mistaken for religious experience. The feeling of dying on an LSD trip was held beneficial by some, an 'ego death'.

In *The Psychedelic Experience*, Timothy Leary, Ralph Metzger and Dick Alpert wrote: 'Ego-death is coming to you, the hour of death and rebirth. Take advantage of this temporary death to obtain the perfect state – Enlightenment.' Riotous sensory stimuli on drugs made rational inquiry seem superfluous. Many rejected centuries of rational analysis out of hand, looking eastward for new modes.

Syd was showered with the trappings of sudden fame – money, women and drugs. In a brief but tumultuous heyday, he was king of a mythic underground Eden, which all hippy dreams aspired to, though could never exist too long once exposed to harsh light. When one paused to reflect after eating the forbidden apple of drugs, Eden vanished like a whisper on the wind.

In line with his move to Cromwell Road, Syd's look changed. In the first flush of success, Syd spent a then exorbitant £20 to get a Dylan/Hendrix perm at a swish King's Road hair salon (the '*obligatory Hendrix perm*', Waters sneered about in song years later). Next were satin and velvet clothes cut to measure by Thea Porter. For Syd, the image tied in with his art, rather than simple vanity. The era demanded peacocks. Barrett stepped up and took on the role of a star.

As his star rose, Lindsay's sharp eye and expert combinations of King's Road cool were critical to his new look. Her keen eye made for inspired apparel choices. With hair grown out, his trendy Carnaby Street trousers and candy-striped shirts sacrificed for velvet, satin, silk in red, lilac, and green, and crimson. Syd and Lindsay took to the King's Road fashion scene with relish, migrating to Granny Takes a Trip, where Barrett was fitted for a satin outfit in green and red. Next was Gohil's

Leather Goods Store in Camden, where the owner outlined Syd's feet for custom-made short ankle boots with elastic gussets.

With Lindsay, Barrett made the scene dressed in silk and velvet, in pied patches like medieval minstrels. Walking on King's Road on Saturdays, dressed in all their finery, the couple were splendid peacocks on parade. In a luminous dash, they prowled boutiques, piecing a unisex wardrobe mix of gypsy, aristocrat, harlequin and harlot. All fitting for the Piper of the Underground. Back at Cromwell, Syd and Lindsay played dominoes while the radio hummed with the Turtles' 'Happy Together'. Initially, their time there was idyllic, with Syd delving into books circulating around the house – he dug into Yoko Ono's *Grapefruit* and Jean Cocteau's *The Holy Terrors.*

In early April, before departing for Lebanon to make a film, Nigel Lesmoir-Gordon accompanied Syd to Abbey Road, filming him with an eight-millimetre camera, while Rick Wright and Andrew King hung out by the studio entrance. An ebullient Syd, all smiles, dashes about in high spirits, dressed in an extraordinary electric-green outfit. Frames later, Syd sits by a tree along the wall ringing the parking lot, deep in conversation with an unknown friend, while Lesmoir-Gordon zooms in. Syd breaks into a megawatt smile. His radiant charisma is never stronger than in this short clip. However, there is a flicker in his expression, perhaps doubts.

Though other perils requiring Barrett's collusion contributed to his downfall, he came of creative age at the critical juncture between pop and rock. He climbed, fell, or was pushed from the escape hatch just as the rock machine went into overdrive. Pop stardom was marketdriven, though what he had not expected was to become a cultural icon. Storm Thorgerson told *Actuel*: 'People made Syd into the centrepiece of a cult way beyond his control.'

The underground embraced Syd as an exemplar. His placement at UFO and Earlham Road had made him into a cult figure even then. Barrett's adoption as figurehead for the acid culture was unfortunate. He went from being a musician forging ahead with ideas, and one eye on the charts, to sorcerer of the scene, with followers and hangers-on. The role seduced him. Barrett had keen aesthetic sense, but was swept up in extravagance, adornments and sensual pleasures.

Zandra Rhodes worked from her Fulham Road Clothes Shop, selling designs inspired by Native Americans and the Orient. Thea Porter also designed clothes with strong Eastern and Middle-Eastern flair. Underground groovers marched around kitted out in her electric gypsy designs, Barrett and Lindsay among them. Her shop in Soho resembled a Middle-Eastern market, with *kilim* rugs and antique silver jewellery. Mr Fish soon followed them on Clifford Street, whose great big ties in multicoloured hues were a favourite.

Jenny Fabian says, '*Harpers & Queen* magazine got me in and I started to write about the underground world for them. We did fashion pictures with Jeff Dexter, Caroline Coon and I all dressed in this wonderful gear. Not the "pseudo" stuff, but real stuff from Thea Porter. We weren't into manufactured clothes from Granny Takes a Trip. We were interested in real Eastern stuff people were importing, beautiful clothes. Thea Porter had this shop in Greek Street in Soho. She would make you clothes from these wonderful materials, expensive old authentic caftans. Right before all the old-fashioned shops opened.

'You couldn't get old-fashioned clothes. You could only get Granny Takes a Trip stuff. Biba was crap. You couldn't wear that! Biba was for the Swinging Sixties, not the Freak-Out Sixties. The scene divided… between those who swung, went to nightclubs and wore Biba, and the freaks… It wasn't my look. I was drawn more to old-fashioned velvety fabrics, like *moiré*, thin silky velvet… The look was antique, looking back to the forties or twenties. I still have a Mr Freedom full-length T-shirt with black stars, and old-fashioned black velvet coat from Chelsea Antique Market, but that's about it. Manufactured stuff in the sixties was "instant", made for the moment and not to last.'

'I can't say I was inspired by or interested in fashion or designer clothes and I didn't seek out Thea Porter or Zandra Rhodes,' explains Jenny Spires. 'I was wearing satin and velvet but "fashion" and "underground" were different concepts. Underground had a different aesthetic. Granny's was innovative in using Indian cloth and designs for clothes but the clothes were not "designer" as such. Designer clothes evolved with Zandra Rhodes and took off at a different tangent. Granny Takes a Trip were first to make Indian print clothes that were not caftans, a bit passé by this time. They also made wonderful men's jackets of

William Morris prints. Hendrix had just arrived in London and had been into the shop. He was wearing one when I first met him. Afghan jackets, with crushed velvet loons and jackets. I had black satin trousers from Quorum, Ossie Clark's shop in Redburn Street just off the King's Road.

'I was still into jeans, boots and leather jackets at this stage as well as velvet and satin. Boots and jeans were Chelsea or Gohil's boots and Levis, no other jeans. We were still very much Beats. Underlying this was not being dragged onto the material plane, in terms of fashion, important.'

Down the Portobello Road, Jimi Hendrix found his famous Crimean War-era Royal Hussars regimental coat, he was the first real rock star in London. UFO groover Firdsi says, 'In London we all dressed like rock stars. It would have been unthinkable to leave the house in something as mundane as jeans and a T-shirt. My wardrobe consisted of feather boas in all colours, sequins, paisley velvets, satins, odd bits of antiquity picked up in junk stores or Portobello Road. Once while delving through a mountain of junk clothing on the north end of the 'Bello, as we called it, I unearthed this metallic jacket that looked interesting. I wore it constantly. One day an old gent stopped me and begged me to take it to the Victoria & Albert Museum for appraisal. I thought him mad, but I did. I discovered it came from the court of King James the First, was worth a small fortune, and they wanted it. I refused, which, in hindsight was stupid, since while in Marrakech, my mother threw it in the incinerator, claiming it smelled. It did, but jeez! It was made from threads of solid gold and dated to 1607. What was she thinking?'

On 11 April, Pink Floyd returned to EMI.

'Astronomy Dominé' was recorded over a seven-hour session. The introduction featured manager Peter Jenner reeling off the names of zodiac signs and planets through a megaphone across a double-tracked overdub. From *Astrology* by Irish poet Louis MacNeice, Barrett wrote a list on the spot, with Jenner intoning in best lecturer's voice as mission control engineer.

Infused with a spirit of sudden discovery, 'Astronomy Dominé' was a continual work in progress. Barrett tinkered with the song's construction right until the recording session, inspired by a single issued that week by

American garage psychers the Electric Prunes. Its A-side, ‘Get Me to the World on Time’, was a minor hit climbing Radio London’s chart. However, Barrett was riveted by the B-side, ‘Are You Loving Me More (But Enjoying it Less)’, he lifted the song’s intro wholesale for ‘Astronomy Dominé’.

Barrett’s Esquire thunders to life with an ominous staccato riff, while Wright chips in with Morse code blips (though no secret message) on a Farfisa Combo-Compact fed through the Binson, echoing both Love’s ‘7 and 7 Is’ and Van Phillips’s eerily orchestrated ‘Space Music’ from *Journey into Space*. Mason’s drum roll sets the stage for Barrett’s opening lead, bleeding across the spectrum as organ, bass and guitar are pushed to the fore with thunderously compressed Rickenbacker bass. Barrett’s frenetic guitar skates over Waters’s swooping bass lines. Smith and Bown lashed compression to Syd’s guitar, for a different sound than Boyd and Woods, with midrange leaping from the mix.

The chord progression was an unusual E, E flat, G, A, free from noticeable antecedents and harmonically unstable. A truly indeterminate scale, music theorist Tomasio Recchia notes: ‘A peculiar, yet flowing chord progression not in a key [although E is best candidate], giving this track dizzying effect, like staring into clear night sky with no moon.’ Like ‘Arnold Layne’’s constrained chords, Barrett and Wright restrain themselves to this chord palette as Syd and Rick chant on oscillating E to Eb, leaving us hanging.

Parrying with chromatic mediants, like a rollercoaster rising to summit with slow grinding gears, Syd leaps to G in false resolution, sweetening to G#, and then he’s off. Awash in delay, Syd dive-bombs into the bridge, free falling from the twelfth fret, through octaves with E then A form barrés. Bending the fourteenth fret of the third string then the twelfth fret of the first string, several times in a row in screaming pitch, Barrett surfs the cusp of regenerating Binson white noise. Barrett lands full stop on the same E that serves as anchor and launch pad, retreat and advance. The group falls away and for one perfect second, we are faced with eternity.

A key Barrett trick was a unique slap-back echo effect, where he raised echo, turned down the dry signal, set delay time to a hair over

nothing, and got a backwards sound. The echo's delay played first, when that tapered off a dry signal rang out.

Wright's swelling organ chord rises, as Syd's Esquire rings with a sharp, piercing note, sampled into the Binson, swelling and echoing out and away. Then, with great instinctive musicianship, Barrett plays counterpoint to himself, each secondary note ringing from guitar a millisecond faster than the 'sample' from the Binson.

Cyclic anomalies of rotary metal drum and unpredictable capstan motor on the Binson made for unintentional variations in delay times and pitched sound. The frequency response and dynamic range of its magnetic wheel cyclically erased and re-recorded many times in a short time lapse with noise, hum, and distortion. Magnetic particles on the recording wheel had infinite depth, giving semi-infinite sustain. The sampled note degraded with each pulse, vaporising as Syd and Rick brought up the volume and swell knobs to produce a thunderous climax, before Syd tears away with an electronic slide.

Waters's leaden bass drives along in insistent *ostinato*, alternating chords in brass band rhythm. A stark solo reminiscent of the Yardbirds' 'Turn to Earth', with gossamer-thin *glissandi*, approximated a bow drawn across a violin, stretching a skein of tension. Barrett sings a descending chromatic '*whoooo!*' with barré chords zooming in freefall, sound pictures of Dan Dare's blue-skinned aliens jumping out to frighten.

Syd bends the absolute highest possible note on first string, straining like a violinist. In one brief phrase, he echoes the mazurka rhythms of Salvation Army bands heard on Jesus Green when he was a child. As Pink Floyd climax like vandals swooping on East Anglia, a droning organum chant on E emerges in the coda, with Syd taking a low antiphonal chant, while Wright harmonises an octave higher. Layered over a two-chord metronomic bass phrase, droning and dirge-like, Barrett and Wright intone a relay chorus.

Vivid in calling to mind a phantasmagorical scenario of watery dislocation, the incantatory verse floats over an insistent rhythm. Psychedelic harmonies excel in slight wavers between major and minor chords to accent droning chants. Accenting synaesthetic green sounds of waters underground with down strokes ringing, the final word trails to its end without resolution.

Discontinuity was a device Barrett often used to keep listeners uncertain as to where they stood harmonically. Michael Hicks, in *Sixties Rock,* notes: 'The harmonic transition between verses consists entirely of major triads sliding in half steps.'

'Astronomy Dominé' is Barrett's first work of brilliance. Tension builds by degrees, with thin, compressed guitar leads playing off the endless expansiveness of the Binson echoing into infinity. Barrett tells us 'stars can frighten' and a freefall through octaves suggests a plunge toward them. As philosopher-scientist Blaise Pascal wrote: 'The infinities between the stars frighten me.' The song set the album's tone, with acid and space connections implicit through sensations that are rife with wonder and fear.

Here, Barrett sounds unlike any of his peers. Simon Reynolds noted: 'Guitar is no longer a kinetic riff machine but atmospheric texture and timbre generator. Fed through effects pedals and signal-processing devices, guitar becomes an analogue synthesiser. Syd Barrett, with his use of slide to create fractal chaos, got to this re- or un-invention of the guitar first.'

Syd took the steel tension of slide blues, added tube-fed electricity and moved guitar from three dimensions into suggestions of a fourth. Discordant squalls of echo-drenched notes churn from the ether, rise to the brink of distortion, to be reabsorbed an instant later. With the imprimatur of genius, Barrett makes the entire assemblage sound simple. 'Making the complicated simple, awesomely simple, that's creativity,' said Charles Mingus.

'Astronomy Dominé' remains the central song of Pink Floyd's early canon, as well as an improvisational set-piece. A sporadic set-opener until 1970, the song was restored to its position in 1994. Even in 2006, Gilmour and Wright played death-defying versions of this core Pink Floyd anthem.

Barrett was fond of using the mechanical stodginess and irregularities of Binson's Echorec to suggest old clocks, creaking gears and antique machinery. Nowhere is this more obvious than at the end of 'Bike', and the ambient midsection in 'Interstellar Overdrive', where a jagged looped guitar cycles erratically. Kris DiLorenzo noted: 'Barrett's rhythms were usually unpredictable. One never knew what process in Syd's brain

dictated when to speed or slow the pace. When to sweeten or sour sound and when to wrench tempo totally out of joint, shifting gears to turn rhythms inside-out.'

In all likelihood, this was down to Syd's experience of LSD-induced oscillations in time and space, throwing musical time into question, and affecting tempo. Barrett used this to his advantage, though LSD's distortional effects crippled his ability to manipulate tempo. This hints at a deeper glitch, if paradox marks the gravitational centre of language, then Barrett's genius and madness sprang from the same fissure.

Waters, structural in approach even then, could only wonder where Barrett would go next. His bass acted like a bargepole on a punt in the River Cam – oar, rudder, and anchor. A footloose mod who found a portal into a new world at UFO, Colin Turner, felt that the group were dependent on Barrett for cues. 'Syd would often go in his own direction, leaving the rest of the guys wondering when he would come back and play something they could identify, so they could join back in! They often lounged around at the back of the stage at UFO, small with nowhere to hide, waiting for Syd. Obvious even then they were Syd's band. Also not consistent, most nights they played like nothing ever heard and other times produced crap.'

Mason's laidback fills and offhand flourishes, matched by Water's aggressive primal bass, serve Barrett's music well. Criticised for being a ticking timekeeper with little rhythm, Mason's double-bass-driven kit often acts as navigational device though improvisational space. His loose, free-rolling drumming provides rhythmic grounding, as he urges the others on with insistent toms.

On 15 April, Pink Floyd appeared in Brighton at an event put together by Hornsey Advanced Studies Group, the band's last stand with them. Technical designer Dennis Crompton projected kinetic diagrams on a sixty-four-foot-wide sheet behind the group. With a powerful PA suspended from the ceiling as the Pink Floyd played, attendants from the St John Ambulance Service treated several people for shock. The *Daily Mirror* screamed: 'The lights went on, the girls passed out, "drugged" by a psychedelic show.'

Medics were surprised that the Hornsey group's strobe lights rather than drugs had set them off, leaving girls twitching on the ground, pale with contracted pupils and ice-cold skin. Lightshow operators did not realise that at 10-30 Hz strobe lighting produced giddiness, nausea, fainting, even seizures. Ultra-low bass frequencies tended to enhance these negative effects.

Three days later, Pink Floyd tried to record a song which has remained unreleased, '(She Was a) Millionaire'. Considered as a potential B-side, Jenner and King each commented that it was 'a very good song'. In waltz time, Syd sang of a millionaire with '*time to spare*'. 'Millionaire' was unfinished and perhaps erased, as four-track tapes often were once a master was made, and certainly if a master was not. Though Andrew King felt 'Millionaire' was the hit single that should have been, the song remains a lost artefact.

Soon after, *Melody Maker* announced that Pink Floyd were to shoot a half-hour film cartoon, 'The Life Story of Percy the Ratcatcher'. The idea sprang from Syd's song 'Percy the Ratcatcher', a whimsical meditation on Syd's black cat Rover Angelica, who he'd given to Jenny Spires that Christmas.

An innocuous rhyme inspired a ditty that became another animal entirely, 'Lucifer Sam'. The 17th-century English folk tale 'Dick Whittington and his Cat', tells of a seafaring ship's cat bought by the King of Barbary. In Walt Disney's 1955 film *The Lady and the Tramp,* wicked twin cats sing a Siamese Cat Song that the staccato verse in 'Lucifer Sam' seems to have sprung from. In Disney's *Cinderella*, the wicked stepmother's cat Lucifer prowls underfoot.

The name 'Jennifer Gentle', used in the lyrics, was culled from 'Riddles Wisely Expounded', from the formidable *Child Ballads*. A British ballad dating from medieval times, in 'Riddles Wisely Expounded' the devil threatens to carry off a maiden if she cannot answer nine riddles.

'There were three sisters fair and bright,
Jennifer, Gentle, and Rosemary
And they three loved one valiant knight.'

Syd Barrett cryptically said, '"Lucifer Sam" didn't mean much to me at the time, but then three or four months later it came to mean a lot.' Barrett's first bad-trip song centred on a Siamese cat who stirs Syd's paranoia as he pads around, always underfoot and watching with fixed staring eyes. From innocuous rat-catcher, the cat transformed into a harbinger that Syd's insight into nature was taking on dark overtones.

One underground familiar insists that Lucifer Sam was 'Thai Sam', who with a fellow student named Thieu dealt acid from a flat in Beaufort Street, where Sue Kingsford and Jock Findlay lived. Thieu and Sam came from wealthy Thai families and studied at the LSE. Crystal LSD wrapped in aluminium was stored in a refrigerator at the flat. Thai Sam, into mind games, once gave visitor Alan Marcuson a strip of foil full of crystal acid that almost drove him mad. Visitor Melissa Chassay described Beaufort Street to writer Jonathon Green: 'Everyone would be there in this dark flat with purple painted doors, joss sticks, everyone playing loud music in rooms next to each other. You'd buy your acid, on blotters.' Dark and forbidding, on Fridays the flat filled with people sprawled on cushions as Sam dripped his acid onto blotting paper.

Another possibility was Peter Walker, lead singer of the Purple Gang, who went by stage name of 'Lucifer'. Chris Beard recalls Syd being fascinated with Walker's occult persona when they first met at the Marquee in January. Walker left the group to join the Notting Hill witch coven that popularised Wicca, and released harrowing psych-folk albums as Lucifer. Syd watched Lucifer Sam and Jenny Gentle sitting together with some alarm. Crying out, Jennifer Gentle transforms into a witch, and the cat becomes the Devil. Whimsy became nightmare.

Contact between Spires and Barrett diminished after 'Arnold Layne', when the band started a long run of gigs and Syd and Lindsay moved downstairs at 101 Cromwell Road in April. Jenny refutes the Thai Sam connection, saying she'd never heard of Thai Sam before. 'I did know Thieu from Cambridge though when he was at Kings College. He was Fizz's boyfriend but I don't remember him at Beaufort Street. Fizz later married him.'

'Lucifer Sam' was written before the scene at Beaufort Street. Jenny says, 'Beaufort Street always had a strange atmosphere. Built over a Moldavian graveyard (the dead are buried standing up) and Sue

Kingsford insisted strange things happened there. Bewitching and being bewitched were part of the times then too. Donovan's "Season of the Witch" was played everywhere all the time by people. It wasn't necessarily to do with LSD, but Beaufort Street was a spooky place. The building had a strange mix living there. Twink, his girlfriend Sally, and Michael Mayhew lived on the ground floor. Kari-Ann Moller had moved into the second floor and then Jock and Sue and others upstairs. The whole block was full of heads and many people seemed to come and go. Perhaps Thai Sam was one. I had friends living downstairs next door. Keith West and Steve Howe from Tomorrow, and Mickey Finn. I saw Syd a few times at Beaufort Street after Jock and Sue moved in. He was starting to behave differently I thought at this time for whatever reason, a bit thin and drawn.'

With Lucifer Sam on his left and Jennifer the Witch on his right, Syd hung in the middle. The witch and her cat was a popular element of English superstition during the 16th century (a vicious reaction to women's roles in Puritan society). During the infamous witch trials, accused witches were often said to have kept satanic cats as 'familiars'. It was claimed that such cats were passed from witch to witch, suckled with a supernumerary third nipple.

Threatening dualities, as in R.D. Laing's *The Divided Self*, began to manifest. Barrett's flair for pinpoint description is used to startling effect in 'Lucifer Sam', mystic reportage raised to high pitch. For Syd, hypersensitive with an intuition bordering on psychic, fantasy compounded reality as LSD made him over-sensitised. As Kenneth Grahame wrote of seafaring Rat in *The Wind in the Willows*: 'His eye lit with a brightness which seemed caught from some far-away sea-beacon.'

The Jimi Hendrix Experience's 'Purple Haze' was released on 19 March, and its distinctive tritone intro figured in 'Lucifer Sam'. The furious overdriven rocker opens with a suspended chord before Syd enters with a descending riff based on a blues scale – a variant on the 'Interstellar Overdrive' riff. With Mason riding cymbals and Waters playing thunderous bass with Wright's cello bow, the connections to surf rock, and Link Wray's 'Black Widow', are evident. Syd rises and falls through scales with Dick Dale-style attack. Mason shakes maracas and pounds skins with wild post-bop ferocity, as Wright plays the Farfisa on

‘Strings’ setting. Syd’s subtle overdubbed backward guitar moans and howls like cats sprung from a Rousseau menagerie.

‘Lucifer Sam’ prefigures punk, as Barrett plays frenetic rhythm guitar with lightning-fast fingering and Waters aggressively saws at his bass strings with a cello bow. The rhythm is taut and threatening, with bent blue notes scattered like wires pulled to breaking point. The descending chords in ‘Lucifer Sam’ resembled ‘Paper Sun’ by Traffic. It is equally possible that they got the riff from theme to *The Prisoner* (0:23-0:27). Seeing as the track for ‘Lucifer Sam’ was recorded on 12 April, and ‘Paper Sun’ came out in May, this suggests competing bands running neck and neck, urging each other on and trading licks.

Toward the end of April, Pink Floyd embarked on a run of seven back-to-back gigs. First stop was the Bromel Club in Bromley, where fan Carl says, ‘We looked forward to seeing the Floyd and the event was packed to the roof. Many kids were turned away as it was standing room only. Many girls and guys fainted due to heat and humidity – nylon shirts and no deodorant. The Floyd boasted a new two-hundred-watt PA system for the first time. The lightshow was projected onto the most grubby of bed sheets, pinned to the wall with small nails.

‘The effect was fantastic, as we pushed to the front. I found myself pushed against PA columns for the entire act. We met with the band afterwards for a drink. I was unable to hear a thing and just nodded knowingly as they spoke to us as we sat around whilst they dismantled equipment. The Bromel Club served no booze, so it was an experience to swig from the same bottle as the band. My hearing came back three days later. Having seen them since at the biggest venues in Britain and the States, you couldn’t relive the magic of being so close to the band and their accessibility.’

April 21 marked their last regular UFO gig. After an early show in Greenford, Pink Floyd mopped the sweat away, had a pint, and snapped their guitars into flight cases. Roadies Pip Carter and John Marsh undid tangled wires on the Farfisa, broke down the drum kit, packed the gear back in the van and blasted down Marylebone Road. They parked on a side street off Tottenham Court Road. Band and crew then had to set up for their second gig that night, a late slot at UFO. As it was to be Floyd’s

last UFO appearance, Bryan Morrison doubled the booking price for his stars. However, Boyd made Pink Floyd promise to return for gigs in June and July.

The next day, 'Arnold Layne' peaked at Number 20 on the UK chart, thanks as much to pay-offs as its undoubted quality. Pink Floyd were making inroads, though few outside pirate radio had heard them. Two nights later, at a gig in Ealing Broadway across London, that was made clear.

'The worst thing that ever happened to me was at the Feathers Club,' said Waters. Indignant at paying seven shillings to hear 'Interstellar Overdrive', some yob from the crowd threw a heavy copper penny coin at Waters's head. 'A bloody great cut in the middle of my forehead. I bled quite a lot. I stood right at the front of the stage to see if I could see him throw one. I was glowering in a real rage. I was going to leap into the audience and get him. Happily, one freak turned up who liked us, so the audience spent the whole evening beating the shit out of him and left us alone.'

Beer-swilling louts at gigs often proved obstreperous. Pink Floyd's twenty-minute-plus freak-out improvisations caused confusion and hostility in unsuspecting, drunken audiences. The Floyd were light years from the mod R&B of wildly popular contemporaries Geno Washington & the Ram Jam Band. Whole flanks of British youth had no idea what was going on in underground London and didn't want any of it, thank you very much.

Having played seventeen gigs that month, they filmed a second promo for 'Arnold Layne' around St Michael's Parish Church in Highgate on 29 April. Inspired, Syd belted out his words, glowering with theatrical intensity as he points an accusing finger at the camera. With remarkable passion, Syd points not at Arnold Layne, but at us. The footage captures Syd and Roger wrestling in woods, well matched, though Roger gets the advantage at one point, only to be surprised by Barrett, echoing the musical duel of Pan and Apollo.

After filming, the band flew to the Netherlands. Between a photo session at an Amsterdam park and an evening appearance on Dutch television show *Fan Club,* Syd staved off mounting exhaustion with prodigious dope smoking, accompanied by Po Powell. Miming 'Arnold

Layne' on *Fan Club*, Barrett appears tired, bags under his eyes, though his hands blur on his silver guitar. Raced at top speed to Schiphol Airport by what Mason termed 'a pack of overexcited Dutchmen', Pink Floyd flew back on the last plane to London.

9. DREAMS AND GAMES

'Sudden and magnificent, the sun's broad golden disc showed itself over the horizon facing them; and the first rays, shooting across the level water-meadows, took the animals full in the eyes and dazzled them.'

The Wind in the Willows
Kenneth Grahame, 1908

Pink Floyd topped the bill at multi-band extravaganza the 14 Hour Technicolor Dream at Alexandra Palace in North London on 29-30 April. To promote the event, Hoppy organised girlfriends to stand in Regent Street and pass out flyers, dressed in miniskirts ten inches above the knee (horror!) and matching shirts adorned with the letters 'U', 'F', 'C' and 'K', until bobbies moved them on. Later, in an MG convertible, the same flower and fancy dress contingent dropped an invitation to the Dream for the Queen at Buckingham Palace.

Envisaged as a 'giant benefit against fuzz action' of the sort that saw Hoppy arrested and tried to shut down *International Times*, the Technicolor Dream was to raise funds for a legal defence fund. Miles, Hoppy and Jim Haynes devised the event as a benefit for underground venues, outlets and media.

Word spread through London for weeks. Hopes soared, with the handbill hinting at big names. Like the 1965 Albert Hall poetry reading, the event marked a turning point for the underground. Seven thousand punters crowded into the vast Alexandra Palace, hired for the night by Hoppy and Dave Howson of Middle Earth. The thought of renting Ally Pally germinated in Hoppy's mind when he photographed the Rolling Stones and John Lee Hooker in 1964. Hoppy stood in the wings, awed by the great hall. One of a series of Victorian glass-and-steel halls built in 1875, Alexandra Palace crowned Muswell Hill, overlooking London like

an aerie. Its vaulted roof and thirty-foot glass windows surrounded space for twelve thousand, with two thousand more in the orchestra stalls.

The Dream began at 8:00pm and went through the night until ten the next morning. Many groovers had been up since the night before at UFO, when Jimi Hendrix jumped up to play bass with Tomorrow. As dusk fell, organisers set off fireworks to alert the underground. The nascent underground-going-overground arrived in droves, congregated at the gates and milled about, looking at a slight loss. Some arrived in black ties, blazers, and evening dress, as befitting a cultural event. Paying the £1 admission, crowds streamed into the hall. Caftan-clad ravers flowed through, bursting into the palace in high spirits. Author and playwright Adrian Eckersley was at the gig. 'Outside, the building seemed to be moving with wailing, formless sound, as if breathing. A cool spring night, the music, from that distance, scored patterns in the air.'

For many, the Dream proved epochal, as recognition rippled through the crowd, amazed at how many fully-fledged freaks were in London, and how many they knew. To some, the event represented the Eden all psychedelia aspired to. Nostalgia for childhood merged with promise-filled futures at a party the underground threw to celebrate itself. The vibe cultivated at UFO went overground, gathering force, though – some argue – losing integrity. The grand night of the underground was a show of force, by simple virtue of gathering under one roof. The Dream galvanised the underground, brought it into the open, propagated core ideas, and imploded – in the manner of mass cultural movements.

Dudley Edwards of Binder, Edwards and Vaughn says, 'For anyone privileged to be there, that was the event of the sixties. There was such a good feeling in the air, everybody tuned in. The huge interior space was lit with big film arc lights turning night into day. A medieval marketplace with stalls and people in harlequin costumes, acrobats here and jugglers there, and a helter skelter. Simon and Marijke from The Fool read cards and told fortunes in a booth.'

Like a baroque reliquary, the colossal steam-powered Willis Organ was under scaffolding for repairs. Spotlights cast looming shadows as Peter Whitehead fought for vantage points with a BBC film crew. The BBC presented a live spot on its nine o'clock news, and the popular *Man*

Alive series. An Italian crew optioned broadcast rights, and rounded out the lot, trailing equipment.

Indica gallery owner John Dunbar was at John Lennon's home. 'We were watching TV and […] thought, "Fuck it, let's go!" We ended at a place where everybody I'd ever known in my life swam before my eyes at one time or another. All eyes were on us because we were with John. I saw people I'd last seen at kindergarten and hadn't seen since.'

Inside the cavernous palace, twin stages at opposite ends often had two bands playing at once. Groups soon found that playing loud enough could drown sound from across the palace, the length of a football pitch. Selmer were volunteered by Blackhill to provide a PA system. Two chaps from their factory set up a pitiful hundred-watt PA, with two 2x12 combos and a Selmer Goliath Bass Cabinet on either stage. Nick Jones of *Melody Maker* noted: 'There was [much] noise. Alexandra Palace wasn't the best place for acoustics; most sound echoing into the high dome and away.'

All night and morning, two bands played at once, causing unexpected conflations of styles as sound resounded off the vaulted roof. Mick Farren swore he saw Lennon, as sound waves clashed in the zone of dissonance, moving backwards and forwards, looking fascinated.

A smaller centre stage on a wooden floor was designated for the carnival-like contingent who gave the underground distinct flavour – poets, performance artists and dancers, clowns and jugglers. David Medalla and the Exploding Galaxy dance company took over the central floor space for a riotous performance. Medalla and half a dozen nubiles in flowing scarves danced freeform pirouettes as powerful lights cast stark shadows across the assembled throng. To the Beatles' 'Tomorrow Never Knows', they performed a 'fuzz death ballet', symbolising oppression rising against the Galaxy's Tribe of the Sacred Mushroom. Truncheon-wielding bobbies chased nymphs and Medalla.

The larger stage for main events was built along a back wall, flanked by the Palace windows. Jack Henry Moore and other technicians dashed from spot to spot, fixing speakers threatening to fuse, and rewiring light fixtures on the verge of collapse. Fluted columns rose forty feet above wooden floors to high ceilings like colossal lilies from Aubrey Beardsley. Five hundred thousand watts of lightshows lit the space from a light

gantry in the centre. Projectors beamed onto billowing white sheets fixed with electrician's tape to scaffolding housing the Victorian organ.

Underground films screened overhead included Jack Smith's camp drag show *Flaming Creatures*. Kate Heliczer and Smith's transvestite mob gambolled in garish makeup onscreen above the punters. The centrepiece was a seventy-foot helter-skelter slide rented for the night, which people clambered up and spiralled down. All no doubt exhilarating on acid, of which never again was there such abundance in quality and quantity.

A bright spark chemist synthesised a sizeable batch of legal designer drug DET (diethyltryptamine), which was given out free. Hoppy, among hundreds, sampled the mild psychedelic. DET lasted three to four hours, creating an urge to wander, giving users enough awareness to realise where they were and where they wished to go. Discoverer Alexander Shulgin described DET: 'The mask-like faces, dream-like mysterious objects, gave me the feeling I had arrived in another world – different, queer and full of secrecy and mystery. An entire epoch, filled with events and happenings, but I knew only minutes had passed.' DET created collective amnesia at the Dream. Few remember anything more than glimpses, and all were markedly different.

The mood was optimistic, as merry multi-hued people milled from corner to corner with endless chemical quicksteps. Ritually lit joss sticks filled the air with sickly sweet smoke. Silvery globes reflected a half-dozen lightshows scattered across the palace. A wire igloo with mosquito netting was set up, where banana-skin joints, touted for hallucinogenic effects, were handed out. A bitter aftertaste was all 'electric banana' left one with, though the idea was a put-on. One had to laugh at the incongruity of standing among this mad, milling throng smoking a banana peel. When not being used for banana smoking, the igloo made an excellent snog-spot. Couples grappled there all night.

Some spent the night roaming, watching lightshows, or climbing scaffolding. Others decamped to corners, where they laid coats on hard floor and stared at acid-induced arabesques, chatted, slept or groped one another. An underground luminary recalls, 'One organiser, who was gay, spent the whole time under a stage having sex with his motorbike boys, for hours and hours.'

Announced by an MC dressed as a cardinal in robes and vestment, acts filed through, one after the other. Forty-odd bands, poets, artists and dancers all played free. First were brilliantly abysmal agit-rockers the Social Deviants. Taking the stage at 8:00pm, singer Mick Farren caterwauled through 'Child of the Sky', clad in black leather. Scottish author Alexander Trocchi of *Cain's Book* fame joined poet Christopher Logue, Michael Horovitz and the *New Departures* team to take turns shouting over groups.

Dudley Edwards says, 'The Dream was more ad-lib. We arrived with our gear but the scaffolding tower was already in place. Somebody was using the top deck for spotlights, so we set up in the middle.' Peter Russell and a lightshow team attached to Cambridge band 117 occupied the top tier while Binder, Edwards and Vaughn cast overhead watch-glass projections on sheets ringing the palace. 'I was in the main tower too, also Mark Boyle, so crowded at times,' explains Russell. '117's shows used thin liquid films sandwiched between slides, using heat or pressure (and sometimes injection) to move them. Some early Polaroid work as well.'

Edwards adds, 'We worked with shallow glass bowls, acquired from old grandfather clocks. Unlike dishes, they had no rim or ridge at the base. We proceeded to inject different colours using oil, glycerine and water, as these did not mix and held their own space. Bowls rested on powerful overhead projectors, we then rocked, spun and shook bowls in rhythm with music. While injecting fresh colours or starting with another colour scheme for each number depending on mood. I have to admit toward the morning we were that stoned we didn't know what we were doing.'

Edwards descended from the scaffolding to take in the scene. 'The Dream was all so relaxed. Denny Laine was sitting on the floor strumming his acoustic guitar with no one paying any heed. John Lennon and John Dunbar strolled through crowds without interference. Whenever there was an interval between live acts, someone pulled the masterstroke of playing 'The Courtly Dances' from Benjamin Britten's opera *Gloriana* by the Julian Bream Consort. This evocative Elizabethan dance music set the theme.'

Although the Musician's Union prevented Frank Zappa and the Mothers of Invention from appearing, plenty of bands played through to the dawn. Among them, the mystifying Utterly Incredible Too Long Ago to Remember Sometimes Shouting at People. Ginger Johnson and African conga drummers played polyrhythmic rhythms, contributing to festivities with a sideline in Nigerian weed. Sam Gopal pattered away on amplified tablas, with Mike Hutchinson and Pete Sears's improvised Indian music with jazz and blues thrown atop. Juno Gemes recalls, 'Suzy Creamcheese was declaring her love for Hoppy on the main stage mike to anyone who cared to hear it. It was just that kind of night.'

John's Children took the stage in matching white Levi's and T-shirts and played twenty-five minutes of shrieking feedback on 'Arthur Green'. Future glam star Marc Bolan was in a sullen mood and stalked around the stage with his guitar over his head, while singer Andy Ellison showered the audience with feathers. The Pretty Things went one better. Their contribution to flower power was a broken piano, filled with flowers, with microphones stuffed inside. Drummer Skip Alan took a pickaxe and destroyed the piano onstage, making a cataclysmic shattering sound.

The freak contingent was well represented by hardcore underground group the Flies, whom Miles cited as the world's first punk band. With vocalist Robin Hunt sky-high on acid, draped in sheets stolen from the backdrops, the Flies launched into a ferocious freak-beat version of '(I'm Not Your) Stepping Stone'. Their scary Soho stripper girlfriends (incongruously dubbed 'the Vestal Virgins') bumped and ground onstage in miniskirts, flashing their knickers for BBC cameras. Hunt even managed to urinate on the audience as they rampaged through a gruesome 'Purple Haze'. (Miles: 'The Flies pissed on the audience, even Johnny Rotten never managed that, they were absolutely appalling.')

The audience was far from impressed until the erstwhile Virgins hurled three-dozen bags of flour over the crowd. The blasé assembly responded with an enormous flour fight. 'They had lots of bags of flour and threw it over us, so the air was dusty and bits of people turned white,' recalled Adrian Eckersley. 'They did this deadpan, moving front stage to chuck the stuff as if emptying a bin – no laughter, no reaction at all, a withdrawn priesthood of weird. "Why are they throwing flour over us?" a bright girl asked near me.'

UFO psych had a raw, anarchic edge. The Deviants and the Flies typified the street edge of the movement. With Brothers Grimm, the Flies formed the UFO cadre who were convinced that Pink Floyd had sold out. Jug band loons the Purple Gang shambled and busked through the classic 'Granny Takes a Trip', with lead singer Peter 'Lucifer' Walker clad in magician's robes. The Crazy World of Arthur Brown made an electrifying impression, with Brown in full makeup prancing with his headdress aflame, shouting, 'Give him a flower!'

Miles filed a telling report in *East Village Other*: 'An estimated seven to ten thousand people, beautiful neo-Elizabethan promenading people, arm in arm, bowing. Only dancing and meaning differed. Men in braided uniforms, cowboy hats, medals, wearing huge fur coats to the ground, false beards, real beards, wearing flared Indian paisley-print frock coats, cloaks of all sizes and shades, wearing chain necklaces and flowers, wearing spats, with artificially curly hair, with Medieval turned-up toes and even a few (very few) in suits. (The greys, they call them.) Chicks wore lace dresses with nothing underneath. Others wore net dresses with little underneath. They had painted faces, gold paints and in almost every case very short mini-dress or miniskirt – often so short as to not cover underwear (also mini) or even to not cover not underwear.

'Dancing, talking, films-light-music-dreaming continued until long after dawn. People crawled into bushes in the garden, swam in the fountain, smoked free banana joints, smoked real cannabis ones, tripped out, ate breakfast, ate candy floss, burned incense, burned candles and tapers, made love, slept, played drums, whistles, flutes, guitars, collected autographs, met old friends. They walked about, danced all night and were relaxed, beautiful, and warm. Even at dawn if someone bumped into you they would turn and say, "I'm sorry man."'

The Dream marked the pinnacle of underground fashion, with the full range of garb in evidence. Here a phalanx of pea-coated beatniks, there a King's Road fashion maven in forties satin dress with chinchilla stole. One freak shaved his head save for a monk-like tonsure; another contrived a wire basket as a mask. Hostile Muswell Hill mods wandered aimlessly, looking in vain to start trouble, outnumbered by metamorphosing ex-mods with French haircuts grown long and telltale coloured silk scarves knotted around the neck as ties. The Beatles'

sartorial dominance saw men with Edwardian beards and moustaches, as John Lennon grokked the scene, clad in sheepskin Afghan coat and granny specs.

Bored punter Desmond Spalding scampered fifty feet above the crowd and walked along a narrow parapet. As the crowd chanted ‘jump!’ Hoppy stopped the music and asked Spalding to get off. Hoppy later ran through the crowd waving a giant Union Jack, while a fur-coat-clad Suzy Creamcheese bounded barefoot alongside. ‘Just go where it’s going!’ she exclaimed to the bemused BBC camera crew. When queried what the underground was against, Suzie said, ‘Wars, blood, income tax!’

Juno Gemes says, ‘A BBC TV crew were interviewing Hoppy and Joe Boyd. The BBC boys looked and sounded like anthropologists from Mars. “Tell me Mr Boyd and Mr Hopkins… what do people mean when they say, ‘Far out, man’?” It was so funny and so telling! Mainstream culture and society was so straight and so far away from understanding the cultural revolution that was manifesting everywhere around them.’

‘I saw footage at UFO one night and almost shit my pants when everyone pointed at me,’ recalls Firdsi. ‘I was onscreen wearing a black hat sitting on a folding chair. I then toppled off the chair. In a semi-interview, I pissed off the BBC cameramen, speaking to me as if I was an idiot, so I let them have it. I went with two friends from Brighton, not used to the London scene at all. I gave them acid and spent the night introducing them to all the pretty people.’

Pink Floyd made their way to the Dream from Heathrow. Stopping in at Edbrooke Road, Jenner and Syd each dropped LSD before driving to Muswell Hill in the Bentley and Transit van. Jenner said, ‘The most psychedelic experience I’ve ever been to. Half the audience was doing acid. I was doing acid. We’d had to take a long drive to get there from a gig in the Netherlands. I did the last bit of the drive in the van. We dropped in at home and did some acid before we went. It started coming on as we were being directed in. I had to steer the van in through something tiny with people wandering around absolutely out of their crust.’

The band alighted at Alexandra Palace at 3:00am. They, like all others, played free for the benefit. Syd wandered the crowd, coming up on LSD, having already smoked strong weed in Amsterdam earlier.

Running into Mick Rock, the pair climbed scaffolding to peer into pipe organ bellows and entertained themselves pelting Yoko Ono with wadded paper as she organised a Fluxus-style happening. With the working title ‘A Pretty Girl is a Manifesto’, Ono had model Carol Mann sat on a stepladder dressed as a nun under blazing spotlights. Audience members were handed scissors, outfitted with a contact microphone plugged into the sound system. Instructed to snip off her clothes, bit by bit they fell away, as bemused male punters stared lecherously, though most seemed confused. Amplified scissors echoed across the palace until Mann sat, in all her glory, nude.

Keith Rowe, performing with AMM, recalls, ‘I remember violence toward Yoko and her models often when she performed pieces with men ripping away her pants. I found it unpleasant, a powerful emotion. Ono had racism and sexism against her. Violence shown to her was out of order. Even today, it would probably be illegal to go onstage and take someone’s clothes off. Though with amplified scissors, it’s possible!’

Syd drifted into the crowd. He swept slow and curious across airy Alexandra Palace. The palace’s acoustics made for long pealing echoes and bursting transient noise cascading from end to end. An installation of light bulbs wrapped around a billboard on a central lighting gantry displayed slogans: ‘Vietnam is a Sad Trip’ and ‘Batman is Queer’ flashed by, also an ever popular ‘£.s.d.’ (pounds, shillings, pence).

At the helter-skelter slide, Syd climbed and watched lights flicker on dancers and bands at either end of the cavernous palace, an ocean undulating below him. Standing atop the helter skelter, taking in the scene, he cast an eye over the crowd, king of all he surveyed. Whether he was satisfied was another question. ‘Syd was completely distanced from everything going on,’ Mason wrote. ‘We were not on our best, sharpest form – and Syd was beginning to show wear and tear.’

Firdsi ran into Syd: ‘Syd was adorable, but spacey as hell.’ Peter Whitehead recalls, ‘Syd looked shadowy and ghostly at the Dream. Syd was already starting to cultivate this as a deliberate image. He functioned that way as self-protection. He never found it easy to communicate.’ The Dream was the last time Whitehead saw Barrett.

Syd’s mystical vibe was the glassy-eyed remoteness of a cannabis and LSD head, though also a strategy to beguile while creating distance.

Miles says, ‘Syd wasn’t that different from others around until he started to burn himself up with acid. There were many around like that by that time. Acid was Syd’s drug of choice. He had a real twinkle of the eye, which came to be a bit mystical. That became a common thing.’

‘Syd Barrett sat around looking manic with staring eyes,’ recalled Daevid Allen. ‘Fashionable for everyone to sit around with staring eyes, as if everyone was demented and out of their minds.’

Whitehead strutted with his camera, capturing vignettes of underground aristocracy. Michael Rainey and wife Jane Ormsby-Gore swanned through the crowd cool and poised, soi-disant in luxurious Hung on You garments. Doomed Suki Poitier, whose boyfriend Tara Browne had died six months previously, wandered lost. Sue Kingsford twirled a giant daffodil beneath her nose, eyes wide with placid stoned contentment, heavy with mascara. Sue embodied the naïve, fleeting purity of flower children at the Dream – blooming in enticing colour. The threat that they may be trampled added to their ephemeral fragility.

‘I don’t have good memories of the Dream,’ says Wynne-Willson. ‘I can’t picture the scene, I can remember being up scaffolding there and someone doing watch-glass overhead projections. I can remember taking equipment up. I don’t remember doing any lights there. Roger Waters was in a state about something. There was fairground stuff, drugs, a lot of drugs. The drug situation had got messy and perverted with people completely in a state from drink and drugs. It seemed to me a real falling apart. I didn’t like it at all.’

As the night wore on, scattered bodies could be found along corridors slumped in sleep or psychedelic entropy. BBC cameras scanned over a woman lying flat on her back waving her hands in delirium, while teenagers slept amid rubbish along walls. ‘The Dream was boring by virtue that it went on for fourteen hours,’ asserts Miles. ‘There is a limit to how many dodgy bands you can listen to. There weren’t many things to do. Cold, with nowhere to sit except on the floor. Not very nice, but a heavy socialising scene. The more people you know, the better time you had. I knew a tremendous number of people, so I had a tremendous time. The Dream has improved with age. At the time, I never saw it as anything fantastic. Only later did it start to take on a life of its own, whereas the Albert Hall poetry reading was a significant event. The

Dream was no different from UFO, only a big one, and I would have preferred UFO any time.'

When Soft Machine took the stage, Daevid Allen wore a miner's helmet with lamplight, Kevin Ayers sported oracular makeup. Robert Wyatt, his cut hair short, wore a suit and tie, and set up his drums sideways. Soft Machine played joke number 'We Did It Again', repeating the title over one monotonous groove for forty minutes. Barrett soon adopted this avant-garde prank, much to his bandmates' despair. 'Soft Machine were good fun,' he insisted.

'After we finished I wandered about among the huge crowd,' recounted Allen. 'All my life I felt an outsider, a freak totally at odds with my time. I realised I was not alone, surrounded by thousands of other versions of myself. I was part of a tribe, movement, and gigantic soul. We looked around and saw ourselves reflected in multiples and felt our power to change the world. The beginning of a peaceful revolution!' Allen also noted, paradoxically, that he never felt more alone in his life. 'As this realisation took hold of my entire being, a celestial orchestra played over a slow beat. I was drawn to the far stage where, unopposed by a simultaneous band, slightly embarrassed musicians played symphonic slide guitar under hypnotic light projections. From the edge I watched, fascinated, as a young guy with mad staring eyes stroked his guitar with metal objects. The music was almost Wagnerian in emotional power. It welled up, expanding through liquid light.'

Allen adapted and refined Barrett's glissando technique over a forty-year stretch with Gong. Robert Wyatt was likewise impressed. 'The Floyd played at four in the morning, one of the greatest gigs they ever did. Syd played with a slide and blew my mind. I was hearing echoes of all the music I'd ever heard, with Béla Bartók and god-knows-what. I don't understand why nobody else has ever attempted to do it since.'

Pink Floyd wanted to take the stage as dawn was breaking, with light filtering through the ornate coloured glass. They emerged dressed in psychedelic finery bought down the King's Road, having sorted out their look. Waters in a cape, Wright in brocaded gold and blue caftan, and Mason in a fake-fur-lined orange patterned coat. In contrast, Barrett appeared rather ordinary, dressed in black and green like his proverbial scarecrow, with silk shirt buttoned as though to ward off a chill. In the

mystic traditions of the Golden Dawn, black and green were ‘flashing colours’, designed to draw energy from atmosphere to earth. With Barrett as ground for atmosphere underground, what price the toll?

Pink Floyd at the Dream was high point of psychedelia for Jenner. ‘A perfect setting, everyone had been waiting for them and everybody was on acid. The peak of acid use in England, a bit hairy at times, an intense experience.’

To a fanfare of the ‘Finale’ by Bream, Pink Floyd took the stage. Colin Turner was on hand: ‘Dawn arrived in a triumphant pink hue, light came cascading in from huge windows. Amid this awesome display of nature, Pink Floyd took the stage wearing flared trousers and satin shirts. People began to awake and hold hands as “Astronomy Dominé” echoed through the Palace.’

Chris Beard of the Purple Gang recalled, ‘I wanted to get my spot, so I sat with others in a meditation group. I can still smell dusty floorboards, hash, incense, and body odour, hear that big-hall reverb, crowd-din and swirling band noise, and drum crashes. Floyd roadies began to get gear organised and lightshow people took over. Dawn was at the gates and everyone was getting tired now, shouting for Pink Floyd to get their asses on-stage. On they trooped, looking unhappy, I thought. A bit of tension there. I was glad we’d gone on earlier so we could enjoy the gig.’

‘The atmosphere was electric,’ adds Turner. ‘An extraordinary connection between group and audience. Then the magic happened. Syd’s mirror-disc Telecaster caught the dawn’s pink light. Syd noticed this and with drug-filled eyes blazing, he made his guitar talk louder and louder, higher and higher as he reflected light into the eyes of his audience and christened those of us lucky enough to be there followers of Pink Floyd for life.’

‘Shafts of dawn light now beaming through high windows caught and reflected back off Syd’s mirror-effect guitar,’ remembered Beard. ‘Something was not right and Syd was not up to it, just standing there out of his tree I suspected. It seemed clear the Floyd were allowing for this, as Roger Waters seemed to take over. I admired Waters for this and was not happy Syd had now drifted off.’

In one photograph, Barrett looks as though he was viewing things from slight remove, as though already absent. Acid accentuated his

offbeat charisma, such that he seemed in retreat even as Pink Floyd approached fame.

The songs Floyd played at the Dream were slow, with good reason: Syd was tired and tripping as well. He spent the performance turned toward his Selmer amp and the Binson, sliding his Zippo along frets in cascades that echoed the length of the palace. Barrett filtered Bream's 'The Courtly Dances' through acid and exhaustion, and played a stunning glissando guitar finale. Daevid Allen spoke of an eerie vibe as Pink Floyd cascaded to a close: 'The glissando guitar-stroker looked as though he was not there. It wouldn't be long before he wasn't.'

As morning broke, sun streamed through the venue's windows, lighting the palace in ghostly white angles. Rolling Stone Brian Jones, arriving a bit late, pulled up in Bentley and emerged looking rather shattered, clad in a full Pearly King outfit. With Gloriana on the sound system, two Exploding Galaxy dancers performed an impromptu, graceful Elizabethan dance in their bare feet. Efforts to inflate a forty-foot-long plastic inflatable tube by Jeffrey Shaw collapsed. Freaks wound plastic round them and fell to the floor laughing. 'Beck's Bolero' by Jeff Beck blasted out, its Indian modal scales colliding head-on with Elmore James and Maurice Ravel's *Boléro*. The last punters filed out, leaving rubbish scattered in their wake. The crowd flowed out the Gates of Dawn into a clear golden morning. Hoppy and Suzy Creamcheese stood at the door. In inimitable style, they shook hands and said good morning to everyone as they filed into the light. Hoppy's trial was four weeks away.

Outside, on a glorious spring morning, freaks sat on the grass surrounding the palace, fanning themselves with copies of *Oz*, coming down off DET trips, coupling in the tall grass. Dudley Edwards says, 'In the early hours people sat on the grassy bank outside the palace, watching the dawn break. An open-backed truck drove up the hill to the entrance. Someone was stood on the back despatching bread and bananas to all present. Peace reigned and all was well with the world.' With London stretched below, the world seemed theirs for the taking at the cusp of May Day.

IT summed up: 'The beautiful scene at the benefit at Alexandra Palace on the twenty-ninth seems long ago when considered in light of all that has happened since then. One became aware, through collecting all these

people, just how much beauty and force there is here. Since the benefit there is a difference in London, people are speaking to people whom they only stared at before. We all know what they are talking about, and it's not pop music or dances and all-night raves.'

Some seven hundred tickets were stolen days before the event. Precious few funds found their way to the organisers. The underground's trusting ways were ill suited to street hustles. Like the Albert Hall poetry reading before, diverted proceeds caused animosity. The culprits, it seemed, were Michael X and his Black Muslim cohorts, hired as security and ticket collectors. Only the film rights sold to an Italian film crew garnered any money. The bill for hiring the palace went unpaid, with the owners pursuing Hoppy and Howson for years. The *Sunday Mirror* sniffed: 'The last struggle of a doomed tribe to save itself from extinction.'

Nick Jones wrote in *Melody Maker*: 'The audience were happy looning about, looking at other's clothes, eating, sleeping, dancing and just freaking out, doing whatever they damn well wanted. Constant films, slides, joss sticks, sounds, chants, or freakers doing acrobatics on scaffolding. Just a nice happening. Fascinating, because people are fascinating, and it takes a long while to get through seven thousand. I found the Dream most absorbing.'

'The 14 Hour Technicolor Dream was a big event and financial disaster,' declares Hoppy. 'Most people were on drugs of one sort or another. The Dream was the crest of a wave. It wasn't fully understood, but a landmark event. Everyone involved has a different story. All are true, one of those paradoxes… The Dream is prime example how memory gives opportunity for many people to claim it was their event. We all claim it was our event. Everyone can claim a piece, if they feel it important. Rather like this dream I had where I'm walking in the woods and come across a box. I look inside and there is something there I cannot see. A metaphor or analogy for the Dream. Everybody thinks they know what the Dream was about, but there is something you cannot find. All accounts are true and conflict with each other. The Dream is a cultural memory, hidden and occluded.'

The Dream stirred a diaspora underground, as people moved in different directions. Giant Sun Trolley split when members left without

warning for India and Afghanistan, leaving percussionist Glen Sweeney to form Hydrogen Jukebox in response. Australian Daevid Allen of Soft Machine was denied entry into England, and sent on the ferry back to France.

'Many people took off after the Dream,' recalls Firdsi. 'I don't know why. I floated around London, and then decided on an acid trip to go to Marrakech. Most went to Copenhagen, Amsterdam, or India, some to Spain. I needed to go to Marrakech, and found few Londoners there. Many returned to London for the winter, which seems dumb considering London winters, but Brits are homebodies.'

In the LSD diaspora, some went to fetch bits of consciousness left lying around the universe, others headed home, and some forsook drugs for meditation. Others went East on the hippy trail. Variants were as unpredictable as LSD's after-effects. As the saying went, 'Some were just along for the ride, some went all the way. Most never knew which way the ride was going.' For Barrett, the ride never stopped. Sleepless for twenty-four hours, he navigated home in the morning light and spent the day high. Caught on the fairground ride of fame, he was roused from his trip by a bang on the door. Off they went, two hundred miles to the Plaza Teen Club in Yorkshire.

Touring accelerated, with more than a hundred gigs played before the remainder of the year was out. When Floyd's van broke down halfway to a show, they pulled off the road. From a callbox, they rang ahead to ask if they could borrow the opening band's gear. They scrambled to unpack lighting gear from the Transit van in the dark, stuffing it and themselves into the Bentley for another cramped two hours. When they arrived, they still had to set up the lighting. After the gig, the band were told they would not get paid. After tense negotiation, they got half the agreed fee.

In the *Independent*, Christopher Hirst wrote: 'On an ill-judged UK tour, Pink Floyd was booked into the Locarno ballroom, Coventry. An unlikely venue for "the sound of the underground". Drawn by chart-topping singles ("See Emily Play" was popular in fairgrounds), most hadn't the foggiest notion what they were in for.

'Syd [was] a charismatic figure in dark curls and a flowery shirt I deeply coveted. The lightshow of leeching colours was exciting but unsophisticated, with blotches of spilled ink on the floor under the

projector. Music strayed into deafening discord. For an hour or so, we were part of the underground. Not all the audience were ecstatic. Mid-way through a protracted and rackety "Interstellar Overdrive" lads from Rootes car works started a punch-up. (The Summer of Love did not blossom in Coventry.) House lights came on, swamping swirling colours and revealing the tawdry tattiness of the Locarno.'

A police dragnet spread after the Dream. Rolling Stone Brian Jones and Stash de Rola were arrested on 10 May, hours after Jagger, Richards and Robert Fraser were released on bail. Dandie Fashions on King's Road was raided, with the Drugs Squad shaking down customers with unnecessary force. The Rolling Stones, out on bail, departed for Morocco.

Firdsi says, 'I knew Brian Jones, Mick, and Keith. I saw the normal side of them, not the flash. Mick Jagger was a decent guy, Keith Richards a sweetheart. Brian Jones was a mess, but we had some great talks. Anita Pallenberg looked down her nose at me, especially in Marrakech. I lived in a Marrakech squat and the Stones were at the elegant Hôtel La Mamounia. I had no money, but I had cachet by having become a local. Marianne Faithfull was nice and the night I had to give her a smallpox vaccination cracked her up. She couldn't believe I worked for a living!'

Mass media spread news of the counterculture across the world. Artists in other epicentres of psychedelia felt a strong affinity, political and cultural, with the London underground. The impact of British imports the Stones, the Beatles and (ironically) Jimi Hendrix was immediate in America. In LPs, newspapers and television, interchange was close to instantaneous for the first time in history. DJs, musicians and underground newspaper writers gauged the pulse of the movement.

Late, great disc jockey John Peel's Perfumed Garden show launched on Radio London in May, and became an underground staple. Peel returned from America armed with new music. With his hip patter and fondness for sidelong album tracks, Peel's underground tunes promulgated the symbiosis between underground scenes in America and Britain.

'Somebody to Love' by Jefferson Airplane, or Frank Zappa's Mothers of Invention, resounded out from windows at Earlham, Egerton and Cromwell, every radio tuned to Peel's show. He was the first to play the

Velvet Underground, or Love. No one else intercut a poem by Liverpool poet Roger McGough with Elmore James's 'Dust My Broom' before segueing into 'Venus in Furs' by the Velvet Underground. Duggie Fields painted at Cromwell Road late at night with the Perfumed Garden rippling in the background. 'At the same time as the Pink Floyd we were just hearing Janis Joplin for the first time, and the Doors, and the Velvet Underground.'

On 12 May Pink Floyd performed their first concert at the Queen Elizabeth Hall on the South Bank of the Thames. Entitled 'Games for May', and organised by Jenner and King with Christopher Hunt – a classical concert promoter who staged 'Music in Colour' – the concert was the first of a series of set-pieces orbiting around themes or song cycles persisting through the band's career.

Blackhill announced, 'The Floyd intend this concert to be a musical and visual exploration, not only for themselves but for the audience too. New material has been written and will be given for the first time, including some specially prepared four-way stereo tapes. Visually, lights-men of the group have prepared an entirely new, bigger-than-ever-before show. Sadly, we are not allowed to throw lighting effects as planned onto external surfaces of the hall, nor even in the foyer. Inside should be enough!'

'Games for May was a theatrical setting, a concert-hall as opposed to a club,' Wynne-Willson explains. 'A feeling we were putting on a show. I felt Games for May was legitimate within the scene, as it were, because it was "art". Stressful, because they were recording it. I do remember someone in the sound booth; the BBC, I believe. New having to operate within a framework. An occasion, Games for May was one of those strange gigs. This frisson we were playing for the "legitimate" market and imagining we were respected in some way.'

In keeping with the mixed-media ethos, synaesthetic sound effects, bubble machines, daffodils, and miscellaneous props were borrowed straight from the underground. Multimedia performances at UFO had fed conceits such as machines blowing bubbles into the audience, which came from artists such as David Medalla, whose Bubble Machine (1963)

used soap, water, air, electricity, a small engine and chance to produce volatile and hypnotic ‘visual compositions’.

Pink Floyd rehearsed in the afternoon. Syd was in good form, rested and in control. They brought wooden logs and amplified saws, mechanical toy ducks, a gong for Waters and tympani drums for Mason. Barrett played a white Stratocaster with a rosewood neck through a Selmer Thunderbird, and had a new Vox Tone Bender Pedal at his feet.

Mason told *Mojo*: ‘Games for May was a very important show, beginning of the concept we spent the next twenty-odd years doing.’ It was during this intensive period that Roger Waters’s interest in theatrical rock’n’roll concerts took shape. Games for May also laid the groundwork for incorporating *musique concrète* sound effects into ‘heavy concept’ albums. ‘In this dank, dingy basement, with an old Ferrograph, I sat recording edge tones off cymbals for the performance,’ recalled Waters. ‘Later the beginning of “Saucerful of Secrets”.’

The concert was reasonably well planned, despite a last-minute scramble. Mason recalled, ‘Although we learnt from it, we also lost money. We had to give up a week’s work to arrange everything. Games for May was on in the evening. We went onto the stage in the morning to try to work out our act. Until then we hadn’t thought about what we were going to do. Even then, we only got as far as rehearsing individual numbers, and working out lighting. When it came to the performance in the evening, we had no idea what we were going to do.’

The concert was in two parts, Waters and Wright’s pre-recorded tapes during the first half, followed by a Floyd set. Crowds buzzed in anticipation along the South Bank promenade. ‘I walked outside on the South Bank before the concert… running into people, and looking at the poster,’ recalls Boyd.

The cream of the underground milled around outside in fancy dress. Among them was Emily Young, wearing a flowing white gown that touched the ground and carrying spring daffodils. Young says, ‘I was not at the concert, I got waylaid outside. There were all sorts of other things happening as well. There were never many hard-core undergrounders/groovers. Weekend hippies would always show up for a concert or festival. Not so many straight cultural types, but plenty happy to tune in and drop out for a couple hours.’

As night fell, the audience filed into the foyer to be greeted by ‘Dawn’; sound effects of birds recorded by Waters (later used on ‘Grantchester Meadows’). The tape served as an overture. ‘I made “bird” noises recorded on old Ferrograph at half-speed, to be played in the theatre’s foyer as the audience was coming in,’ explained Waters. ‘I was always interested in the possibilities of rock’n’roll. How to fill space between audience and idea with more than just guitars and vocals.’

As the audience filled the eleven hundred-odd seats, Pink Floyd road manager Pip Carter, dressed as an admiral, marched along the aisles with a giant basket of springtime daffodils, which he threw by the armful over the crowd. The house lights dimmed until the hall went dark. The audience gasped as maniacal laughter rebounded around the space from loudspeakers front and back, panning in surround.

Games for May inaugurated the Azimuth Coordinator, a grandiose moniker for a device designed to send quadraphonic sounds effects across a two-hundred-and-seventy-degree span. Taking cues from UFO’s four-way speakers, and controlled by a joystick, sounds swept in three-dimensional surround waves. The sound effects assembled by Waters, Wright and Barrett played through the Coordinator. Waters enlisted Bernard Speight, maintenance engineer at EMI, and explained what they wanted. Intrigued, Speight designed the quadraphonic apparatus – four modified rheostats in a metal box. The Azimuth Coordinator remained a staple of Pink Floyd’s live shows for decades, the most demonstrable outgrowth of the night’s event. Floyd sat at the forefront of electronic innovation, drawing from Karlheinz Stockhausen’s quadraphonic Kontakte in 1960.

‘We got this guy from EMI to erect speakers at the back of the hall – predecessor of the Azimuth Coordinator,’ explained Jenner. ‘We had an incredible lightshow by then. The concert, first pop show ever held in the hall, was unbelievable. Everybody went berserk.’ Duggie Fields was sat down front, and viewed the event as a turning point. ‘Games for May was when Pink Floyd started playing games with technology, bouncing sound all around the hall.’

For Mike Leonard, the performance was less compelling, ‘I found Games for May stilted. They began by sawing a big log of wood, with sound amplified. Everyone looked uncomfortable. It didn’t flow.’

Amplified log sawing was experimental, if painful. Waters installed two large Chinese gongs, part of his stage set-up for years after, which he banged with furious glee. He punctuated ‘Chapter 24’ by hurling potatoes at the gongs, sending metallic reverberations around the hall.

After being almost invisible for the early part of their set, under brilliant, primary-coloured liquid lights, Pink Floyd tore through ‘Matilda Mother’ and the effects-laden ‘Flaming’. Theme song ‘Games for May’ was soon to be recorded as ‘See Emily Play’. For ‘Bike’, the group played a bicycle mounted with contact microphones to pick up the sounds of its rotating gears and ringing bell. Two mechanical toy ducks, mounted atop Plexiglas cabinets stage-front, quacked during the song’s coda, while a pair of large tympani drums sat stage-left for Mason’s star turn on ‘Stethoscope’.

They screened the ‘Arnold Layne’ promo in thirty-five millimetre on a giant backdrop that ran the length of the stage. Wynne-Willson’s lightshow beamed from the projection booth with full strength thousand-watt bulbs. Peter, Suzie and John Marsh operated oil lights from the back as lightshow lanterns set at the foot of the stage illuminated the hall in stroboscopic flashes.

Pink Floyd launched into ‘Arnold Layne’, followed by ‘Candy and a Currant Bun’. Joe Boyd bounded up to Peter Jenner and asked what could be done, as Syd’s vocals were inaudible. The group stormed through twin instrumental powerhouses, ‘Pow R. Toc H.’ and ‘Interstellar Overdrive’, playing with wind-up toys onstage in the midsection, chasing them with quadraphonic microphones. Mason said, ‘We just took props onstage with us and improvised. What we did went down well, but a lot got lost. We thought we’d use props and work our act out as we went along – extremely difficult. We found our ideas far more advanced than [our] musical capabilities.’

Waters laughed, ‘You could get away with chasing clockwork toy cars around the stage with a microphone. Much less controlled. Everyone in the group was into doing something different. We did some lunatic things. I moved flowers from vase to vase because I couldn’t think of anything else to do. I’d run out of potatoes to throw at the gong. I thought if I kept moving then nobody would take any notice of what I was playing.’

As a coda, ‘Bubbles’ (later used on ‘Sisyphus’), with sound effects by Wright, accompanied soap bubbles filling the hall. The bubbles caught the light, refracting over the audience. An all-encompassing multimedia event, Games for May was visual, tactile and auditory. No doubt, some bright light even tried to taste the bubbles as they drifted down. Speechless ushers turned apoplectic as the bubbles sank onto lustrous new leather seats. The four-way stereo mix echoed with ‘Ending’, an instrumental piece by Syd Barrett (later used by Nick Mason on ‘Grand Vizier’s Garden Party’). House lights came on and applause filled the hall. One by one, Pink Floyd filed back on. Encore ‘Lucifer Sam’ saw Waters playing bass with a cello bow, as stroboscopic lights pummelled the stage.

‘Rather than using a scalpel on the imagination, the Floyd were using an electric drill,’ noted the *Financial Times*. ‘The performance was billed as a salute to spring, but far removed from nature. Instead a triumph of the mechanical and belligerently avant-garde.’

Pink Floyd were banned from Queen Elizabeth Hall for forty years before they returned, fittingly, for Barrett’s memorial concert. Waters explained, ‘We contravened a regulation. We were told people might have slipped on flowers we threw into the audience. Someone I know was sitting next to two old ladies who sat there still and silent until the interval. Then one turned to her friend and said, “They’re very good, aren’t they?”’

In a good-natured review, Anthony Thorncroft wrote: ‘The audience which filled the hall was beautiful, if strangely subdued. To enjoy them was alone worth the price of a ticket. When you add in the irrepressible Pink Floyd and a free authentic daffodil to take home, your cup of experience overflows.’

IT reported: ‘The choice of Queen Elizabeth Hall for Games for May was good thinking. A genuine 20th-century chamber-music concert. Acoustically, the hall is better for amplified sound than natural sound and the cleanness of presentation of the hall was perfect for loose mixed media. The Pink Floyd, a tape machine, projections, flowers and the Queen Elizabeth Hall, all combined rather leisurely. The first half was a straight presentation of their sound and lightshow. The second half moved right into the hall and into the realm of involvement. Musically,

the second half bordered on pure electronic music and very good at that. Good to see the strength of a hip show holding its own in such a museum-like and square environment. More of this.'

A success, Jenner and King fired off a press release for Games for June; a follow-up concert was set for Chiswick House. Though the event never happened, seeds were sown for larger shows.

Games for May presaged presentations like *The Man and The Journey* (or *The Massed Gadgets of Auximenes*), where Pink Floyd sawed logs at the Albert Hall in 1969. Pete Dockley, in a tarpaper monster kit, set off pink smoke bombs. Pink Floyd later had roadie Alan Styles come onstage and prepare breakfast, or take tea listening to an amplified radio, ideas culled from performances at UFO. Games for May marked the midpoint between Barrett's spontaneous happenings and Waters's structural ambitions.

Barrett made a prescient remark: 'Really, we have only just started to scrape the surface of effects and ideas of lights and music combined. We think the music and the lights are part of the same scene. One enhances and adds to the other. In the future, groups are going to have to offer much more than just a pop show. They'll have to offer a well-presented theatre show.'

John Marsh, sacked from his day job for taking the day off to help set up for Games for May, was taken onto the Floyd payroll full-time. Blackhill Enterprises was now a large crew, with four band members, two managers, a lighting engineer, two road managers, and a secretary/driver. The group's hierarchy mirrored England's class structure: managers, products of Westminster and Oxbridge; band members, eleven-plus graduates with art and architecture college training; lighting engineers and drivers, minor aristocrats skylarking; and road managers – working class.

Pink Floyd appeared on the 14 May edition of *Look of the Week*, a popular evening cultural television arts programme on BBC2. In another gambit aimed at a cultured audience, the band were sandwiched between novelist Christopher Isherwood and artist Dame Laura Knight. Opening with 'Pow R. Toc H.', Syd's face loomed from the dark, eyes full of life, as Waters neighed like a horse. Presenter Robert Robinson intoned, 'That

sight, those sounds were made by the Pink Floyd, a pop group who took over the Queen Elizabeth Hall on Friday for the entertainment they called Games for May.'

Dour Austrian musicologist Doctor Hans Keller opened with a contemptuous introduction. 'The Pink Floyd – you're going to hear them in a minute and I do not want to prejudice you… but four quick points I want to make before you hear them. The first is that what you heard at the beginning, that short bit, those few seconds, are all I can hear in them. This is to say, to my mind, there is continuous repetition. Proportionally, a bit boring. My second point is, terribly loud. You couldn't hear it because it isn't as loud from your sets as at the Queen Elizabeth Hall on Friday. I will ask them about that when we come to talk. My third point is, perhaps I am a little bit too much of a musician to appreciate them. Why I say that is that, four, they have an audience. People who have an audience ought to be heard. Perhaps it is my fault I don't appreciate them.'

Spurred on by Keller's disdain, Pink Floyd launched into a magnificent 'Astronomy Dominé', a peak of Barrett's tenure. A smiling Syd waved his arms in the air with elongated Granny Takes a Trip brocaded sleeves straight from Tolkien, bringing them down while intoning 'whoooo', like a child's imitation of a ghost. Peter Wynne-Willson's lights rippled across the sound stage, casting phantom shadows and flickering in time with Mason's booming drum rolls. Syd, relaxed and in control, slid his Zippo across the silver Esquire. Wright intoned with harmony vocals; a rare look at Syd's Floyd in full flight.

Studio lights came up as the astral airs of 'Astronomy Dominé' faded into Keller's absurd question-and-answer segment. The morose musicologist began with, 'Well, if I may first turn to Roger, I want to ask one fundamental question, of which our viewers may not be fully aware of because they didn't see all of it. Why has it all got to be so terribly loud?'

Waters, eyes rolling skyward, answered with a sarcastic, 'Well, I guess it doesn't have to be. That's just the way we like it, we didn't grow up in the string quartet… It doesn't sound terribly loud to us.'

Keller sniffed in haughty contempt, 'Not everyone who hasn't grown up in the string quartet turns into a loud cock, er, pop group, so your

reason is not altogether convincing, except you like it. What I'm saying is if one gets immune to this sound, one may find it difficult to appreciate softer sound. Syd, yes, no?'

Syd Barrett, suppressing a smirk said, 'I don't think that's so. I mean, everybody listens. We don't need it very loud in order to be able to hear it. Some of it is very quiet in fact. I personally like quiet music just as much as loud music. We play in large halls and things where obviously volume is necessary. When people dance volume comes in on its own.'

Keller asked, 'Well, that's interesting, "when people dance". You did start, if I'm not mistaken, as a group that accompanied dancing?' Barrett grinned, 'Yes, you could say that.'

Waters added, 'We've only done two concerts. I guess pop music is the scene we're in. You play gigs around ballrooms and dance halls, and that scene, because that is how it works. We felt no real reason why we shouldn't stage an organised concert in a large hall where people can listen to what we do. Because dance halls are not good places to listen to the music. Most people come along and the music, for most of them over the past few years, has just been a background noise they can shake about to.'

Keller asked, 'Were those two concerts successful? Syd?' Barrett, thoughtful and alert, replied, 'Yes, quite so. The way the act has developed over the last six months has been influenced rather a lot by the fact that we played in ballrooms, obviously the first market. Concerts give us a chance to see that maybe music we play isn't directed at dancing like normal pop groups in the past.'

'Have you encountered any hostility toward your creation?' questioned Keller. Waters replied, 'Well, yes we have. I guess there has been hostility going on in odd places in the country. The only hostility we've seen has been from professional knockers in the press.' Waters fixed the camera with a fearsome expression, hissing, 'Robert Pitman!' – the *Daily Express* journalist who had slated them.

Keller asked, 'Do you feel aggressive toward the audience?' Barrett and Waters answered in unison, 'No, not at all!' Keller added, 'In spite of all the loudness?'

'There are not many young people who dislike it,' said Barrett. 'Some people think we deliberately try to shock the audience, or use volume to

keep them quiet. This is not so.' Doctor Keller concluded, with a dismissive shrug and eyebrows arching toward the heavens, 'Well, there it is. You can pass your verdict as well as I can. My verdict is it is a regression to childhood, but after all, why not?'

Syd, though handling himself with perfect aplomb, appears fleetingly tense and disconnected, as though alternating currents pulsed through his brain. The camera stops on him and for a split-second, he stares at Keller in a disconcerting way, eyes flashing with hostility. At one point, he stumbles over his words before jolting back into his sentence, helped along by Keller. Cracks in his psyche peeked through.

Pink Floyd returned to Sound Techniques Studios on 18 May to record 'See Emily Play'. The theme Syd wrote for Games for May was earmarked as the group's next single. 'The closest I heard until then that could be considered as a single release,' explained Norman Smith. 'I dressed it up and put one or two things on. They didn't mind whatever I was doing to it. I don't think Syd was too keen. I'd got used to that, so I pressed on.'

Barrett expressed strong reservations about the song being a single, getting into a bitter row with Smith. They recorded eleven takes, editing from a seven-and-a-half-minute version. 'I was in from the birth of that and that was commercialised, some gimmickry, because I saw that as a single straight away,' added Smith. 'One was looking for a follow-up to "Arnold Layne" – I was at any rate, on behalf of the record company.'

When Pink Floyd booked time at Sound Techniques, John Wood was shocked – EMI was superior in equipment and staff. He told Jeff Touzeau: 'They certainly had been having problems at Abbey Road. My suspicions were the working atmosphere.' Hoping to recapture the spirit that fuelled Joe Boyd's production of 'Arnold Layne', they trouped over to Chelsea. Later, more than a change of locale was required to inject sessions with needed spark, as Barrett's muse became elusive.

David Gilmour returned on a break from touring France, and rang Syd, who invited him to the session. When Gilmour walked into the control booth, Syd did not appear to recognise his friend. 'When I got there, they were all working away. We did talk, but Syd had this strange starey-eyed look, not friendly. There was something troubling him. He

didn‘t look like the same person. I saw a sign of what was going to come. Tipping at that point, definitely in a strange mental place and struggling.’

Syd’s semi-mystical, glazed look hardened to a piercing stare, unnerving all in his immediate circle. The worry was that Syd was staring but not seeing; his mind wrapped in private enigmas. The combination of touring, drugs, homebound chaos and conflicts about Pink Floyd’s direction left him, at moments, stuck in time. There is a distinct possibility he was having absence seizures, ten- to fifteen-second bursts of catatonia, as electrical impulses flashed across his brain. The possible temporal lobe damage occasioned in the aftermath of his psychedelic trip in Cambridge in 1965 was catching up with him, the drugs and flashing lights aggravating matters.

In the last weeks of May, when not in the studio, Syd was on the road. When not on the road, he was immersed in the topsy-turvy domestic maelstrom of Cromwell Road. Barrett’s prodigious work-rate began to falter. What was once effortless now took eleven takes as Barrett’s voice began to sound a touch maniacal. For the first time, he sounded frail.

On 20 May, at a gig in Southport, fan Bill Beaver recalled, ‘The Floral Hall was a typical ballroom; Pink Floyd seemed out of place. The audience was a couple hundred mods – short hair, sharp suits with long vents and brogues, and “support” was a Tamla/soul disco. Sound quality was good; they appeared absorbed in their music and played with heads down, failing to make any contact with the audience. Likely, they wished they were somewhere else, and not playing their “hit” in a provincial dance hall to uninterested mods. The only time anyone spoke was when Syd mumbled, grudgingly, “This one’s called ‘Arnold Layne’.”

‘Meandering free-form instrumentals didn’t endear the group to the audience – most wanted their disco back. They played two sets with the disco in between. The Pink Floyd were subjected to muted, but none the less audible, slow-handclapping by the no-nonsense Lancastrian audience. I didn’t join in – I was mesmerised by the slides.’

The following day, Pink Floyd returned to the studio to record ‘Bike’. The song was one of Syd’s oldest, Andrew Rawlinson recalled him playing it in the back garden of Roger Waters’s house on Rock Road.

Syd’s tribute to music hall references the 1922 standard ‘The Laughing Policeman’, with its maniacal laughter as chorus. ‘Bike’ also

recalled Peter Sellers and Spike Milligan's absurd 'The Ying Tong Song'. Edwardian nostalgia was combined from a half dozen sources. He also assimilated elements from the traditional children's rhyme 'Mr Nobody' (also used in 'Octopus'): 'I know a funny little man/ As quiet as a mouse/ Who does the mischief that is done/ In everybody's house!'

Barrett glanced across secondary sources and conflated words to form lyrics. Author Tim Ellison added, 'Occasionally psychedelic songs are merely about objects. In "Bike", each verse is about a thing: bicycle, cloak, gingerbread men… No context exists for any of these things as subject matter in the song. Lyrics are random, whimsical bits of information.' This is common fallacy in analysing Barrett's lyrics. In 'Bike', the object acts as the signifier, on which the lyric hangs.

Dismissal of Barrett as a writer of songs with simple rhyming structures – doggerel verse, more Hilaire Belloc than Shelley – does a disservice to a well-versed songwriter who broke new ground with pop songwriting modes. 'Whimsy' is often a tag that is bandied about – light-hearted, joyous, though lacking substance. (Kevin Ayers wrote 'Another Whimsical Song', rolling his eyes all the while at the dismissive tag). Though whimsy is part of Syd's canon, the fanciful and fantastic are but two elements among many. Unpredictable shifts in cadence and tempo with intricate lyrical compounds show much consideration. Whimsy and fairytale rhymes account for a small percentage of his songs, the ones most remember. The true undertow is of a man who has outgrown the carousel, trapped in fairyland.

In 'Bike', Mason opens each verse with tympani, while Barrett intones the repeating verse that holds the song together, ascending into a different key each time. Here, heartache belies whimsy.

Syd further referenced *Punch* magazine's Cockney character 'Arry. The tear in his his cloak, red and black like Cambridge undergraduates, hints at a fraying psyche or public image. 'Bike' is about trying to find the right gift for a girl. Childlike attempt trails into beautiful cacophony. Radio journalist David Romm asks, 'Does this represent the playful child any girl would want in a boy or dark inner self no woman should come near?'

At the song's end, Syd pauses to linger on the word 'things', leaving it suspended. More than just a neat rhythmic closer, the allusion is to love

versus material possessions. Still, he offers her anything, everything, from his gingerbread men, pet mouse Gerald, even his treasured bike. Moreover, there is a lingering cheerless doubt that she'll give him anything in return.

With its vaudeville tack piano, the finale is a parody of Gilbert and Sullivan's operettas. Waters, Wright and Barrett join in on a campy fanfare. Author Cliff Jones noted: 'The tempo changes at the end of every verse. The rising glissando note which finishes each chorus was achieved using crude oscillator and vari-speeding the tape down while the track was running.'

Recorded over a ten-hour session, at the end, the humour begins to curdle. 'Bike' ends in a coda imbued with a slightly sinister overtone, as though Barrett were trying to let everyone else hear the sounds in his head – a room of musical tunes that is stranger than anticipated.

Footsteps echo down a long hallway haphazardly, a door opens with heaving creak, pauses, and then slams shut. A *musique concrète* sound collage freed from melody or harmony erupts. Cymbals and discordant cello converge with asynchronous clockwork echoing Great St Mary's in Cambridge, mashing headlong with Sun Ra's 'Cosmic Chaos'. Pink Floyd broke open EMI's toy chest, and collaged oscillators, clocks, gongs, bells, mechanical toys, and queasy violin.

The room of musical tunes fades into the recesses of Syd's mind, though not before one last bolt from the blue; quacking ducks fading out and away. Like a gaggle in formation over Grantchester Meadows. We have been brought from dawn and cosmos in 'Astronomy Dominé' back to earthbound sunset.

Slowed by half, the dizzying loop is the group's rough spliced bellowing laughter. The loop echoed the fade-out on *Sgt Pepper's,* first played on Radio London on 12 May, beating the BBC by eight days and general release by two weeks. Smith and Bown culled clockwork sounds from Abbey Road's sound-effects cupboard, and rigged oscillators. Smith had to shake his head in wonder at 'Bike': 'The most fantastical muddle of sounds and time signatures and somehow Syd makes it all make perfect sense. One of the last tracks where Syd was truly in control.'

'Bike' uses the simplest chords, but makes merry with abrupt tempo shifts. The song heralded the second phase in Barrett's songwriting. An

altogether riveting, disturbing and hyper-lucid cycle characterised by bizarre key shifts, tempo changes, lyrical oddments and scattered shards of genius teetering close to madness.

'The associations were always odd,' observed Waters. 'They became more bizarre as time went by. If you take "Bike", the lyrics attached to the meter in a satisfactory way […] There's something very English about the completeness of that. So unpredictable. Unpredictability combined with simplicity made it so special.'

In Barrett's 'moods', fragmentary motifs designed to evoke particular feelings. Motifs emphasised rhythmic shapes rather than tempos, Syd's divisions within bars was a device used to accent mood. Music theorist Phil Salathé notes: 'Melodies shaped by texts, with loose metric and phrase structure that varies with its vagaries, is […] a hallmark of Syd […] In "The Scarecrow", "Bike", and "Scream Thy Last Scream", metric and phrasal structure of music was subjugated to accentual rhythms of Barrett's wandering texts, often unpredictable and irregular. These elements formed a malleable style whose initial impressions of freedom and off-the-cuff-ness belied complex musical surface.'

Journalist Chris Welch recalled the delight in the *Melody Maker* office on first hearing 'Bike', remarking how no one but Syd could have written such a song. The day they recorded 'Bike', Welch interviewed Syd for the paper's 'Blind Date' column, where pop stars reviewed new releases sight unseen. At Studio Three, Welch recalled, 'I found Syd chatty and amiable, although a little worried and frightened. Syd crouched in a small darkened room as I arrived with my crude portable record player and inky notebook, to play a daft selection of records.'

Syd was quiet all day, to the extent that Jenner and King peered from the control room to see whether the interview was coming off at all. Welch said, 'As we talked I calmed him with soothing words and noticed his managers peering through the control room window at us and whispering, "Syd's talking to him." Barrett ran through the singles, dropping asides: "The new wave of music is all embracing. It gets across and makes everybody feel good." Also: "If you want your own hit it's best to make your own sounds." And more pointedly: "It doesn't matter if an artist is dead or alive about records being released."'

Syd derided deceased country singer Jim Reeves's 'Trying to Forget' as 'a very way out record. I tapped my foot to this one. I don't know who it was. Well, let me think, who's dead? It must be Jim Reeves! It's another that would sound better at 33 1/3.' Syd howled with laughter. In a sharp mood change, Syd stared at Welch with a haunted look and launched into cold, angry diatribe. Barrett crushed acolyte David Bowie, when he commented on the latter's 'Love You 'Til Tuesday'. 'Yeah, it's a joke number. Jokes are good. Everybody likes jokes. The Pink Floyd likes jokes. It's very casual. If you play it a second time, it might be even more of a joke. Jokes are good. The Pink Floyd like jokes. That was a very funny joke. People will like the fact about it being Monday, when in fact it was Tuesday. Very chirpy, but I don't think my toes were tapping at all.'

Barrett repeating the word 'joke' eight times in nine short, fragmented sentences – what psychologists call clang association, words or a single word repeated like bell clanged incessantly. (There are two readings here; Barrett could well have been making an obscure reference to Samuel Beckett's *Endgame*: 'Nothing is funnier than unhappiness, I grant you that. Yes, yes, it's the most comic thing in the world. And we laugh, we laugh, with a will, in the beginning. But it's always the same thing. Yes, it's like the funny story we have heard too often we still find it funny, but we don't laugh anymore.') Barrett sat in silence with a piercing blank expression before a smile flickered across his face, inscrutable as the Sphinx. Welch said, 'And then he smiled; playing the games that drove others to despair. A sweet date but I don't think I could have survived a tour with Syd.'

Beyond Barrett's idiosyncratic wordplay, and gift for puns, his unusual juxtapositions hinted at language coming apart. 'Clanging (glossomania) is explainable as distraction by self-monitoring,' wrote leading syntactic theoretician Doctor Michael Covington. 'Clanging in psychosis focuses on first syllable of a word, humour and poetry focus on the last.' Syd sat right in the middle, with a one-syllable joke. In clang associations, the first syllable of the preceding word was subterfuge, an intrusion of dominant meaning. Here, Barrett's internal dialogue about sarcastic jokes in the group slips into the interview.

One gets a feel for Barrett's imperious airs, as he orders Welch to remove an offensive pop platter. 'Fade it out!' he demands of a Vince Hill single. As for Barry Fantoni (a classmate at Camberwell): 'I don't want to hear it again!' Convinced he was in the right, Syd could be petulant and demanding when he wanted, irritating his bandmates. His irritability masked palpable unhappiness. Welch noted: 'When Syd finally smiled, I thought of him as a prisoner in a cell, someone I should have gone back to visit and try to help, if only by making him laugh again.'

Barrett built to nervous breakdown, looming as the demands on him magnified. Wynne-Willson said, 'Syd had an ethereal quality. He had a devastating smile, not used a lot, but a lighting-up smile. Later, when getting into a state, he sometimes used the smile, or almost that smile, to pretend he was okay, but it was different.'

After their marathon recording sessions, Pink Floyd set off on five back-to-back shows across England, galloping from one venue to the next. Town halls, hotel event rooms, ballrooms followed, an endless road ever farther down the pike. The caravan of Bentley in front and van bringing up the rear wound across the English countryside. Pale and withdrawn, Barrett sat stiff and silent in the van with Wynne-Willson and Marsh. With ill-secured equipment banging into vinyl chair rests, each bump on the two-lane country roads rattled Barrett's fragile composure. Cigarette smoke and the stale stench in the van mingled with blustery spring winds whipping through cracks in the windows. Scented pastures and woods beyond, green all around, though no time to stop or breathe.

At petrol stations, attendants studied them with unfriendly gimlet eyes. A brief stop at the promenade in Blackpool gave Barrett a much-needed breather. Walking alone cleared the mind. He wandered amid funfair amusements, stirring memories of happier days at Midsummer Fair with Libby. At the grand Empress Ballroom, Barrett and company trotted out their one hit for the punters, on an incongruous bill between DJ Jimmy Saville and fading Merseybeat combo the Koobas.

Dazed, Pink Floyd dismounted in Wales, for a 'Spring Holiday Dance' inside a barn. More startling was their audience, the entire Gwent Constabulary, 'A' Division. Despite some apprehension as Floyd launched into their set, soon enough, ruddy constables and garishly made-up wives tanked up on bitter and cider cheered them on. A ragged

thirty-minute ‘Interstellar Overdrive’ saw the group drive the volume higher with Syd out front thrashing wild chords on his guitar. The set-list shrunk to two improvisations and an occasional grudging ‘Arnold Layne’, tossed off as a closer. There was no point singing; the audience could not hear, and Syd could not hear himself.

On 29 May, the Floyd joined the Jimi Hendrix Experience, the Move and Cream for ‘Barbecue ’67’, at a cattle auction hall in wilds of Lincolnshire. Admission was £1, so whoever was in the audience certainly got their money’s worth. Some seven thousand punters crowded into the hall as thousands more were turned away at the gates. Frustrated, they turned heel and smashed shop windows in the town. One fan said, ‘The Barbecue ’67 concert was horrendous. A large shed, crammed and stifling, promoters massively oversold tickets. They cleared off and left groups to perform in impossible conditions and police to manage the crowd. Jimi struggled to keep his guitar in tune and amps functioning. (“Fuck You. I’m gonna get my guitar in tune if it takes all fucking night.”) Cream, as second top billing, would have suffered the same.’

Bottom of the bill, the Floyd opened on a separate stage tucked in a corner, speakers shorting and rattling in cabinets, pealing distortion echoing across the cattle hall. Syd’s erstwhile guardian, Pip Carter, had been trading their speaker cones for defective substitutes to feed his dodgy habits. The intense heat threw instruments out of tune and sent Syd’s effects boxes awry. Many were still filing into the hall as Pink Floyd finished ‘Arnold Layne’. Buzz-cropped mods in Fred Perry shirts stood, arms crossed, eyeing them in cold suspicion.

Punter Martin Wilmot recalled, ‘Pink Floyd were the first big band to start. Impossible to believe, but they had two recent hits and were a psychedelic pop band. Terrible. The lightshow was pathetic, although credit where due, pioneers of the art form. You could not hear vocals and volume was too low to hear instruments. It didn’t quite attain amateurish.’

Not all was lost, as Eric Clapton and Jimi Hendrix watched from stage side, as a distracted Barrett, seemingly miles away, played glissando swoops and crab clustered atonal chords. Hendrix said his music ‘could be on similar lines to what Pink Floyd are tackling. They don’t know it, but they are the mad scientists of this day and age.’

On 1 June, EMI released The Beatles' *Sgt Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*. As Pink Floyd recorded, the Beatles spent seven hundred studio hours forming their psych-pomp epic in the adjacent Studio Two. Wright had a clear recollection of them arranging 'A Day in the Life' section by section. Within days, 'Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds' and 'With a Little Help from My Friends' resounded from Ladbroke Grove to Haight-Ashbury and all points between.

Pink Floyd took a precious few days off, and threw a party at Edbrooke Road, blasting a pre-release copy from EMI, windows propped open with speakers. June Child recalled with fondness, 'Unbelievable, the whole house was full, everybody rolling joints. I didn't smoke, so I just used to roll and I was a wonderful joint roller. I'd sit and roll and keep passing them. None of us had any money, you didn't go to grand dinner parties but you made many dinners. Everybody would bring cheap plonk and instruments and you'd have a wonderful night.'

In a bitter twist, Hoppy, the birdlike underground impresario behind so many ventures, was jailed the day *Sgt Pepper's* was released. *IT* lamented: 'The man who drives our UFO is in the hands of the enemy.' Hoppy spent the much-vaunted 'Summer of Love' in prison, where *Sgt Pepper's* being played on the radio kept his hopes up during nine months inside. Hoppy's absence had a distinct dampening effect on the scene. Hoppy embodied the freewheeling sprit of the underground, and was its prime catalyst. In his unobtrusive manner, Hoppy had directed the flow and maintained peace on many a night at events around London during the past two years. He walked into rooms and sparkled with ideas. The Free School, All Saint's, UFO, 14 Hour Technicolor Dream and *IT* – all events which, without Hoppy, would not have developed any further than stoned talk. Smoking hash generated ideas, but often robbed one's capacities for realising them. Hoppy, a notable exception, remarked to author Jonathon Green: 'There's something about England I've never fathomed, but I'm sure is true: if you've got the bottle to go out and do something, anything, it's like a magnet.'

As a magnet, Hoppy attracted the underground and establishment alike. Hoppy said, 'A slogan we had, which isn't true, was "There are no leaders." Of course there are!' Hoppy was one. His imprisonment did not

bode well for the underground. The psychedelic movement, blooming in volatile colour, showed a touch of withering. Steve Abrams, of SOMA, a lobby for decriminalising cannabis, said, 'When Hoppy's trial came up, he insisted on pleading "not guilty" though he had no defence. He had a previous conviction for possession of cannabis but insisted on a jury trial, risking a longer sentence. Hoppy completed a classical recipe for self-imprisonment by lecturing the court on the need to legalise cannabis.'

Sentencing him to nine months imprisonment, Deputy Chairman of Inner London Sessions, A. Gordon Friend, said, 'I have just heard what your views are on possession of cannabis and smoking of it. This is not a matter I can overlook; you are a pest to society.' Hoppy's friends felt his harsh sentence was punishment for rejecting his middle-class upbringing, Oxbridge education, and establishment job at Harrow. A hero underground, Hoppy was a traitor to the establishment. He was trundled off to Wandsworth Prison (and later the grim Wormwood Scrubs) to serve his sentence. 'I found going to jail traumatic,' says Hoppy. 'I wasn't ready. I had some acid in my body when I went into gaol, enough acid for several days, stashed in a convenient orifice. I was completely freaked. I started feeling the horrors. I would cry, I was very upset. They put me in hospital soon after I arrived and gave me a lot of Largactyl, which just wipes you out and neutralizes you.

'I landed in jail from my own actions. I didn't look ahead and see what would happen to me. John Esam took hold of his situation. Esam was caught, but he made a successful outcome. I was the opposite. I didn't see it coming. When it did, it hit me right smack in the face. Jail had a deep effect on my life afterwards, some negative. I suppose it must have come out in my attitudes.'

In a cynical gesture, the Obscene Publications Squad chose that day to return, without explanation, folders and ledgers twelve weeks after the seizure from the *International Times* offices. No charges were brought, though the message was clear: 'Mind how you go.'

On 2 June, after more than a month away, Pink Floyd returned to UFO, a homecoming party thrown by the underground for their house band. Posters announced: 'My watch stops, my radio is silent, but what do I care, at UFO?' Also promised was 'all-nite Intermedia', the point where

drugs, technology and rock music met. An advertisement in *IT* read: 'UFO is the place to go but get there early to avoid sensory disorientation.' Barrett showed up in a profound state of sensory disorientation.

'They arrived and because of the crowd it was crushed, faces two inches from your nose,' Joe Boyd recalled. 'They all came by, "Hi, Joe! How are you?" "Great!" The last was Syd. The great thing with Syd was this impish look about him, this mischievous glint. I said, "Hi, Syd." He just looked at me. I looked right in his eyes, no twinkle, no glint. As if somebody pulled the blinds, "Nobody home" – a real shock. Changes like that are surface manifestations of something that must have been going on for a long time.'

IT reported: 'The Pink Floyd played last week to the largest crowd UFO has ever held. At times queues stretched for yards up Tottenham Court Road. Twice the box office had to close because the floor was packed. The audience included Jimi Hendrix, Chas Chandler, Eric Burdon, Pete Townshend and members of the Yardbirds. Appeals by Suzy Creamcheese and Joe Boyd were made to the emotional crowd to prevent them taking any action against John Hopkins's imprisonment, until after his appeal has been heard.

'A pity that with all this happening, the Pink Floyd had to play like bums. Soft Machine also appeared briefly to perform a poem for John Hopkins. The Tales of Ollin dance group played for about forty minutes and completely captured the audience's imagination, also on the bill was the Hydrogen Jukebox.'

Launched from ruins of Giant Sun Trolley, Hydrogen Jukebox subsequently became the Third Ear Band. The group's all instrumental, acoustic and improvisational sound was rife with hypnotic world music and experimental jazz performed on oboe, violin, cello and percussion.

Daevid Allen recited a 'poem of summer sadness' for Hoppy, while Soft Machine filled in with jazz-poetry in action. An angry Allen read, 'Our fathers who art in power. Doctors of dead politics, magicians of the political lie…'

A film clip illustrates the shortfalls of the underground when faced with adversity. Messages too ill-defined to rally support, or to fight oppression, the airy dissociation of LSD made poor substitute for steely

resolve. The headline in *IT* ran: ‘In their hearts they know we’re right,’ followed by: ‘Your inactivity put the Stones inside.’ The underground overextended on a dream.

Barrett began to feel reservations even about UFO. ‘I remember at UFO, one week one group, then another week another group, going in and out, making that set-up, and I didn’t think it was as active as it could’ve been. What we were doing was a microcosm of the whole sort of philosophy and it tended to be a little bit cheap. I only know the thing of playing, of being a musician, was very exciting. Obviously, one was better off with a silver guitar with mirrors and things all over it than people who ended up on the floor or anywhere else in London. The “general concept” I didn’t feel so conscious of as perhaps I should have. I mean, one’s position as a member of London’s young people’s underground wasn’t necessarily realised and felt from the point of view of groups.’

At the end of Earlham Street was the Arts Lab at 182 Drury Lane, another way-station on the underground railroad opened by two *IT* staffers, Jim Haynes and Jack Henry Moore. Radical filmmakers the London Film Co-Op screened inscrutable films amid loose performance art, Lindsay Kemp’s mimes with David Bowie in tow, a harried Sue Miles cooking upstairs, and various shenanigans in the warren-like backrooms.

Anthony Stern sat editing his San Francisco footage with a soundtrack provided by the Floyd. The Balls Pond Road commune in Dalston rode east in exodus at nightfall to feed the scene. There, speed-fuelled dance company the Exploding Galaxy held court. Throbbing Gristle’s Genesis P-Orridge, exiled Brazilian tropicália artist Hélio Oiticica and filmmaker Derek Jarman lived there at various times.

Wynne-Willson notes, ‘The Arts Lab opened in June, a seriously alternative establishment, with artistic rather than political aspirations. I don’t remember Syd being there much. Rick might have ventured there but I don’t think Roger or Nick did.’ All-night films screened in the cinema downstairs, with foam rolls on floors as seats, or music theatre, poetry recitals in the tiny theatre upstairs. A night at the Arts Lab could consist of a performance by Jeff Nuttall and improvising theatre troupe the People Show (who once locked an audience in a cage for an hour),

howling massed sound from the Spontaneous Ensemble, or American mime Adam Durius in angel wings against a backdrop of recorded tapes. The cinema featured films by Andy Warhol and Kenneth Anger. The spirit was participatory, stalwarts made the Arts Lab lively, though it also served as a refuge when they were too stoned, or missed the last train.

'I haven't been to the Arts Lab or anything, so I don't really know what's happening,' admitted Syd. 'There are just so many people running around doing different things and no kind of unity. It doesn't really bother me.'

When Andrew King approached the Belloc Estate for permission to use Belloc's verses on 'Matilda Mother', he was turned down flat. Ultimately, this made little impact, as Syd wrote his most evocative lyrics in their place. 'Matilda Mother' touched on Barrett's childhood, using first-person narration to recall childhood stories read him by his mother. He dipped into his trusty *Nursery Rhymes of England*, adapting 'when good King Arthur ruled this land' for the song's opening line.

With a particular nostalgia for childhood, 'Matilda Mother' suggests anxious pining for the not-so-distant past. Andrew King stated, 'Childhood was the first and last place where everything made sense to Barrett.' His songs were filled with nostalgia for childhood; and awareness it could not be regained. What William Wordsworth called, 'The memory of what has been, and never more will be.'

A spectral whiff of dread pervades 'Matilda Mother', with Barrett's mother holding the key in deciphering scribbled black lines. Words read aloud unlocked synaesthetic shimmers; mother only has to read the lines and everything appears to shine, as Wright and Barrett wailed in unison. This 'shining' of words read aloud defines power, and formed powerful associations for Roger Waters in his ode to Barrett, 'Shine on You Crazy Diamond', where the wail is used again.

In the chorus, Wright and Barrett intone like a psychedelic Everly Brothers, giving their saccharine-sweet harmonies an edge. A descending chromatic jangling guitar in the intro segues into the background vocals echoing the drawn out 'waiting' in the shrill chorus.

There are unresolved statements, a call-and-response between tenses, between past and present. The imagery of a crimson eagle with silvery

eyes is altogether more psychotropic, hinting at Aleister Crowley's scarlet and silver invocations filtered through Marvel Comics' Doctor Strange ('The Ruby Rings of Raggador', or 'The Crimson Bands of Cyttorak'), and James Frazer's *Totemism and Exogamy*: 'Silver Eyes, with reference to the eyes of the raven.' From *The Crescent Moon* by Rabindranath Tagore Syd gave to Jenny Spires: '…to turn night into day they lighted numberless lamps and showered silver threads from the sky to imitate sunlight.'

'Matilda Mother' vividly recalls 183 Hills Road in its obliquely haunting imagery of a doll's house, shadows and faded perfume. A true touchstone of Barrett's psyche, his home was a world in miniature. With spectral hallways and large Victorian rooms ringed with crown moulding, a cellar and a manicured wilderness of back garden, evoking what the late Ian McDonald, in *Revolution in the Head*, called 'deceptive sunshine and mysterious laughter behind half-open doors'. McDonald referred to The Beatles' 1968 'Cry Baby Cry', as likely to have been inspired by 'Matilda Mother'. Shared allusions to childhood stories, choruses drawn from 'Sing a Song of Sixpence' and eerie waltz-time verses echoing with ringing finality marked Barrett's influence on his one-time idols.

'See Emily Play' was released on 16 June. Despite reservations, Barrett drew a childlike steam train for the single's sleeve. With 'Arnold Layne' an augury, 'See Emily Play' was prophecy in full. Where 'Arnold Layne' peaked at Number 20, 'See Emily Play' was a Top Ten smash. Cold days when Pink Floyd took to the Roundhouse stage and blew out house lights were gone. An immediate hit, Pink Floyd were pop stars.

Jenner and King sent a pre-release copy to Radio London. By 25 June, 'See Emily Play' hit Number Three in their weekly countdown, as John Peel took a special liking to it. The song began a streak across the national charts, spending five weeks in the Top Ten. Peaking at a dizzying Number Six on 29 July, the single was huge on the BBC and pirate stations alike.

Barrett told *Melody Maker:* 'Singles are always simple. It was probably me alone [who wanted singles]. Obviously, being a pop group one wanted to have singles. I think "See Emily Play" was fourth in the

hits.' Rosemary Breen said, '"See Emily Play", a lot more fairytale-like – that was him.'

Written at rehearsals for a college gig at Kitson Hall, Leeds on 6 May, the band worked out the basis of the song before the gig, then wrapped up the rest afterwards.

'I was asleep in a wood after a gig in the North of England, when I dreamed of a girl coming through the trees, shouting and dancing,' revealed Syd. 'That was Emily.' In truth, Emily Young was a neophyte raver on the scene. Empathetic rather than condescending, Barrett reproaches her with an astute couplet. His diction, like prose read aloud, was infused with literate richness, nonexistent in rock. Author Dave Lewis notes: 'Barrett favoured writing pop songs with roundabout references, uneven phrase lengths built on lengths of lines within his text rather than predictable eight-, twelve-, or sixteen-bar structure. "See Emily Play" has a nine-measure verse and nine-measure chorus, unheard of in pop songs. Something about it works.'

Lyrics in Syd's own hand contained notable disparities from the finished version. A small difference on paper became emphatic on the single, as Syd juggled words with care to evoke moods, and subtle double entendre. One could argue that the game in the song is wordplay itself, a prelude to a frolic in the woods. On paper, the words suggest a frolic gone wrong.

The appeal of 'See Emily Play' never wanes; beautiful and literate, a perfect pop gem. Barrett harkens back to *Hamlet*, where Ophelia, driven half-mad by love and loss, falls from a willow branch into a river and drowns. Resonant imagery lies in sidelong glances, touches and emotions. Interpretations are as many as concise lines are few.

'Emily' has been likened to the willowy maidens of English poetics, ritual Games for May fertility rituals, seductive LSD illusions, even Syd's anima – his undiscovered counterpart. In Jungian psychology, the anima represents a man's unconscious or true inner self. Despite elliptical inscrutability, the emotional cadence is direct and true, as Barrett's voice cracks when he sings of Emily's tears. ('What is it that makes little Emily cry? Come then, let mamma wipe the tear from her eye,' from *Rhymes for the Nursery* by the Taylor sisters provided the initial melancholy spark.) In his 1871 *New Variorum Edition of Shakespeare,* Barrett

grabbed elements of its descriptions of stage costumes: ‘a similar pattern is seen on the gown, which nearly touches the ground. On the head was worn the curious horn-shaped biretta.’

In a hymn to the English wood, Emily is the May Queen, and ‘See Emily Play’ a May Day song, celebrating pagan rites of spring. Games for May equalled May Day, a pagan holiday celebrating the ceremonial marriage of the King of the Wood to the May Queen, where Jack the Green danced ahead of the May Queen in parades. The May Queen, representing the goddess; a Green Man representing the god of new vegetation. In the ‘Merry Month’ folk ‘wore the green’, decked in greenery and may blossom. Morris dancers circled a Maypole with ribbons. The lingering pagan festival of Beltane celebrated fertility with fêtes and gatherings. The pagan abandon of May games in times past, associated underground anarchy with fertility rituals.

The theme is unrequited love. Emily embodies a dozen archetypes in classical literature and poetry. Barrett was familiar with 19th-century artist John William Waterhouse’s paintings of Ophelia, lying in a river, gown flowing in a satin trail. River nymphs Granta or the Undine, who weds a knight to gain a soul. The flower, fame and glory of the Muses, archetypal lost maidens all, and tragic archetypes.

The correlation between ‘Astronomy Dominé’ and ‘See Emily Play’ tied the River Cam to the cosmos, an earthbound manifestation of celestial machinery. Here, oceanic abandon implied surrender to primal forces. Sheila Whiteley, author of *The Space Between the Notes: Rock and the Counter-Culture,* writes: ‘The final cadence suggests lack of finality and coming down in a different place. This incompletion feeds ambiguity prevalent throughout the song.’

An examination of Percy Bysshe Shelley’s ‘The Song of Asia’, which featured in Syd’s copy of *The Cambridge Book of Poetry*, reveals its influence on Syd’s lyrics:

Whilst all the winds with melody are ringing.
It seems to float ever, forever, [‘See Emily Play’]
Upon that many-winding river,
Between mountains, woods, abysses,
A paradise of wildernesses!

Till, like one in slumber bound,
Borne to the ocean, I float down, around, [‘Astronomy Dominé’]
Into a sea profound of ever-spreading sound.

For her part, Emily Young observes, ‘Floating forever on a river is a perfect dream image of the soul moving through time and space, through eternity. Of the world at peace in its place in the cosmos. Individual and universe flowing in perfect order with nature, at one. So, I love “See Emily Play”, altogether a wonderful and literate pop song. The instrumental interval takes me right back to whirling around on that floor at All Saint’s Hall. Makes me laugh aloud, and start whirling again.

‘The words have fierce sadness for me now, something desperate there. The song as story is poignant, beautiful and serious. The first two verses tell a sad tale of disconnection, of sorrow, even despair. The chorus confirms loss of grounding, of safety, with circus whirls of insanity looming. In the third verse, the anima image of the creative spirit floats forever on a river. Perhaps this is the solution to dangers of disconnectedness – wearing a gown that can touch the ground, and floating forever on a river. This could also be seen as no longer required to be in control, being taken for the ride, abandoned, surrendered – a potent vision however I look at it.

‘Not me, personally, Emily Young, that inspired the song. More, Syd used the image of me stored in his memory as a figure to represent what was waiting to be brought to consciousness and transformed into song. Which I think was his own inner drama, fear of losing his way, suspicion amid the fun and the hurly-burly, his spirit of creativity was going awry. The girl in the woods was visions of his own quite delicate feminine creativity, his anima, and spirit of his vulnerable, damageable talent. Even then, he knew he was in trouble, in danger of losing something precious.

‘“Emily” is Roger, the real man, not Syd, the one who plays. Moreover, definitely not me. A warning to himself, which he could not heed – a teaching to us all. A tragic song ultimately, “See Emily Play” has lived with me for the last forty-odd years.’

Barrett’s best-known song, Pink Floyd’s big hit, and a classic of its era, ‘See Emily Play’ captured Syd at the cusp of transition, steaming full-throttle toward fame, and nervous collapse. Even Ray Davies of the

Kinks acknowledged ‘See Emily Play’ as ‘the most beautiful example of its time’.

‘See Emily Play’ remains irresolute, with words conveying aching longing. Structurally, it is perfect, with word forms in equal frequency, length and dispersion. Core recurrent word forms are ‘Emily’ offset with ‘tomorrow’, and by inference, tomorrow never comes. Clouds formed on the horizon, foreshadowing imminent trouble.

One line echoed the morbid sensuality of the Rolling Stones’ ‘Ruby Tuesday’, hinting at what constituted losing one’s mind meant to Syd; it was bound up with defeated dreams.

‘Although it sounds a bit gimmicky, hardly any special effects were used,’ said Wright. ‘That “Hawaiian” bit at the end of each verse was just Syd using a bottleneck through echo. The part that sounds speeded-up, though, was. John Wood upped the whole thing about an octave. Onstage, we cut that bit out… I don’t think the success of “See Emily Play” has affected us personally. Sure, we get more money for bookings, but the next one could easily be a flop.’

A jangling interval saw Wright playing barrelhouse ragtime piano (on Electric Baldwin Harpsichord), and Syd indulging in an eccentric guitar vamp, doubled in frequency. Norman Smith engineered a similar trick on the Beatles’ ‘In My Life’. On the ‘Hawaiian bit’, Barrett slid from an E barré chord to A minor with high B affixed, accenting the arch condescension of ‘a-ha’ that peppered the verses. Restrained, Barrett used a touch of Binson echo, slight Selmer distortion and some fuzz pedal, judicious and economical as the lyrics. Here, as on ‘Late Night’ and ‘Remember a Day’, Barrett departed from slide blues for exotic Hawaiian slack-key slide, or Ki Ho’alu. ‘See Emily Play’ ended with Waters’s bass ticking like a metronome, marking time for Barrett’s first explosive phase at its zenith.

UFO groover Jenny Fabian penetrated the Floyd’s inner circle, and caught Syd’s eye. ‘Syd had just about gone by the time I got anywhere near him, or was going,’ Fabian says. ‘I must have heard them two or three times at UFO. I knew Andrew King from before. I wanted to go backstage, because what I saw out front was so fantastic. You always want to see more. It’s not enough, and it wasn’t enough for me. I wanted

to see how the machinery worked. You knew Syd was the cog, as it were. Then you wanted to discover Syd.'

Fabian's 1970 roman à clef, *Groupie*, vividly depicts a 20 June Summer Ball at Mary Magdalen College in Oxford. 'All these students and debutante chicks in long dresses were looning about, getting stoned on strawberries and cream and champers. The group said it was all too much. As they had plenty of time before they were due to play, we decided to split down to the river and turn on. I managed to sit with Syd on a punt apart from the others and rolled spliffs for him. This warm mist crept along the river. Water lapping against the boat made us feel relaxed and peaceful. I told Syd how groovy it was to be here with him. Quite suddenly, he put his arm around me and started talking about Japanese temples. I sat leaning against him, and wondered if I was getting anywhere. I was afraid to speak. I didn't want to interrupt his voice or spoil the almost transcendental mood I was in. I didn't understand what Syd was talking about, but it didn't matter. We stayed there until it was time to go back and play.'

Pink Floyd lumbered on under the marquee tent at 11:00pm for their first twenty-minute spot. Fabian watched from the light tower with Susie and Peter. 'The Floyd had quite an effect on the students, who hadn't seen anything like them before. Being a bit stoned, the strobes seemed especially effective tonight. From where I watched, it was as if the entire concert platform lifted into the air and jerked sideways in sudden frenzy. The contrast of quiet electronic plucking of Syd's guitar, and sheer volume they worked up to as they all joined in to form a tune, left me breathless.'

If Fabian was breathless, one-nighters and studio sessions had exhausted the group. They went back on at 3:15am to a roomful of drunken debs and hooray Henrys. Even without drugs, Barrett was up for days on end. Sleep deprivation and exhaustion brought on their own altered states. Syd's sensitivity to flickering lights did not help. Wynne-Willson disdained strobes, though alternating lanterns with rapid-fire motion meant a flicker effect pummelled the stage. Eyes closed or open, Barrett was subjected to lights pulsing in time with his brain waves. As Fabian noted, hash was enough for stroboscopic lighting to induce altered states. At some point, Barrett let feeling trapped onstage get the better of

him. He turned to face the lights, well aware they acted as large-scale Dream Machine. Flickering in time with his alpha waves, lights sent Barrett in and out of trance-like states, even hypnosis. Doctor Sam Hutt agrees, 'Strobes would have affected him a lot.'

Doctor Stanislav Grof, researcher in psychedelics, related taking LSD while subjected to strobe lighting. 'This incredible blast of white light came. My consciousness was leaving my body, and then I lost the planet. I had a feeling of existing in a totally disembodied state and became the universe. I experienced the Big Bang, raced through black and white holes, and witnessed astounding galactic events.'

Strobe light could trigger complex-partial seizures in a person with low seizure threshold. Flickering lights at high beta frequencies (20-32 Hz) are associated with intensity or anxiety. In complex-partial seizure, a person suffers a blank in consciousness, though without convulsions, much the same as a sleepwalker: far-off glazed stare, mumbling, and rubbing thumbs against forefingers. Intermittent strobe lights caused all nerve cells processing visual stimuli to fire at once. An interference wave pattern in the brain created the perception that time had slowed.

Barrett's spooked eyes and stiff, lumbering gait bore remarkable resemblance to a hypnotised state. Flashing lights, exhaustion, drugs and whatever predisposition Barrett may have had to temporal lobe dysfunction might have left him in a state resembling hypnosis or catatonia.

'We did use stroboscopic lighting onstage a lot in the early years,' confirmed Gilmour. 'Pink Floyd before my time was warned you shouldn't do it so much. People had fits and convulsions while stroboscopic lights were going on. Drugs as well as stroboscopic lighting could send anyone over the edge. It was hard to play, onstage, straight. With strobe lighting going on, even if you shut your eyes it made little difference, interacting with body rhythms or brainwaves. Syd's demise has been blamed on drugs, but it's not out of the question to suggest stroboscopic lighting allied with drugs contributed to the collapse of his faculties.'

Returning to London, Syd got out with Fabian at her flat in Bayswater. They began a sporadic though intense two-month affair. Syd continued writing rapidly, though darker songs cropped up. Syd wrote

‘Scream Thy Last Scream’ and ‘(Down in the) Beechwoods’. As Syd’s holistic vision turned sour, he dredged the dark side of fairy stories and Mother Goose rhymes, quashed pagan lore. Grimm Brothers fairytales or unhappy pier amusements where haunted graveyard mute skeletons rose from coffins. In a magic roundabout gone awry, Syd was caught at the fairground.

As sessions drew to a close, on 27 June, dissatisfied with ‘Interstellar Overdrive’, Pink Floyd overdubbed a glorious second layer straight over the previous version in one take. After innumerable tries, they captured their live sound by doubling everything. Smith and Bown rode the console levels with deft skill, drawing out subtleties on one layer while obscuring dissonant textures from the other. Blending jarring tracks, they further cut guitar and organ improvisation and layered them backwards into the mix, experiments stirred by Wright’s interest in Stockhausen’s Telemusik.

Pink Floyd overdubbed harmonies and on 29 June, ‘Flaming’ was mixed. Andrew King recalled Barrett participating in the mix, testament to Smith and Bown’s liberality. Before, only the producer and engineer set foot in the control booth, with groups invited in for playbacks alone. King said, ‘Syd was one hundred percent creative, and hard on himself. He wouldn’t do anything unless he thought he was doing it in an artistic way. Syd would throw levers on the boards apparently at random, making pretty pictures with his hands.’

On the second storey was a small room down a hallway where mixes were edited, a makeshift store of musical offcuts. Smith and Bown added edit pieces to ‘Matilda Mother’, the coda and verse leading into the instrumental mid-section.

The Piper at the Gates of Dawn was complete. In four short months, Syd’s masterpiece was done.

On 29 June, Keith Richards and Mick Jagger were convicted on drugs charges. There was uproar in the courtroom, as hipsters in the gallery shouted and shook their fists in anger. Carted off to Wormwood Scrubs, they nodded at Hoppy in the morning line-up as the screws barked orders. Fury at such severe sentences reached boiling point at a

spontaneous demonstration outside the *News of the World* building, police turned dogs on demonstrators and six were arrested.

The next day, Richards and Jagger were released on bail. That night at UFO Tomorrow played for a charged audience. All talk centred on the convictions and anger was palpable. Twink leapt from behind his drum kit and grabbed the microphone, chanting 'Revolution, now!' until the entire club was chanting and shaking fists.

At midnight, the club emptied and they marched in extravagant dress to Piccadilly Circus, as several hundred from other West End clubs joined them. They mobbed the *News of the World* building, writing slogans on car windows in black tar soap. Ending at Piccadilly Circus, the crowd protested, to bemusement of night-time trade – prostitutes, junkies, cruising gays and gawkers. The crowd returned to UFO at 3:00am.

Mick Farren was beaten by police and Suzy Creamcheese arrested. Hoppy says, 'When I was in jail, Suzy Creamcheese was put into a private insane asylum by her parents. They wanted to give her electroshock therapy and she managed to talk herself out of it. A strong person, weaker people wouldn't have been able to.'

Suzy, sent to St Andrew's Hospital in Northampton, wrote to *IT*: 'The war here in Britain is yours, and personal increased freedom will do more to get you through the winter than a suntan.'

The UFO pro-Stones demo was a rare instance when club culture acted on any principle except hedonism. UFO regulars Caroline Coon and Rufus Harris, among the throng, resolved to set up Release, an organisation to defend the growing numbers of young people on drugs charges. 'When the Rolling Stones were arrested, everyone felt that as an attack,' recalls Wynne-Willson. 'You could put up with regular prosecution of drug offences, but that seemed to be deliberate. I don't know why we took it so personally. The heavy hard-nosed political thing was later, potentially violent. Our scene was non-violent. The hip attitude was the revolution was internal anyway, personal rather than political. As far as I was, and am concerned, politicians are discredited anyway, so I wouldn't take an alternative politician any more seriously than an established politician.'

The underground viewed conventional politics as corrupt. In the immortal phrase of Jack Henry Moore, paraphrased from Antonin Artaud,

which Hoppy forever after quoted, ‘politics is pig shit’.

‘The Pink Floyd may have been darlings of London,’ said Jenner, ‘but in the suburbs Pink Floyd would have things thrown at them onstage. After “See Emily Play”, screaming girls wanted to hear the hit song.’ Waters said, ‘“Arnold Layne” and “See Emily Play” were minor hits. We would not perform them live because we considered the three-minute form irrelevant to live performance.’

Touring grated upon Syd’s fraying nerves. One needed to be young, focused and driven by a want or wish that defied logic. Night after night, playing to indifferent – at times hostile – provincial audiences took its toll. The crusade through provincial ballrooms and the faded grandeur of dance bands from days past, filtered through Syd’s strained eyes, was such that he might have felt like a strange creature in a zoo.

The others coped more effectively, with Mason describing his driving force as ‘fear and rum’. Barrett was finding pop stardom had nothing to do with his art. ‘The gigs were not remotely well scheduled, given fees paid then,’ asserts Wynne-Willson. ‘We seemed to be pounding the one motorway every night. There wouldn’t be a linear run of gigs. Right upcountry and then down. Syd was frustrated gigs were often so unsuited to the group’s music. I don’t know if he saw himself as frontman. Although Syd would be singing, Roger would always try to be a pop star. I don’t know fronting the group was a pressure on Syd, but travelling was arduous. Syd would tend to smoke his way out of that – not the only one.’

Though Syd is said to have been on a twenty-four-hour trip, smoking hash got him through on the road. Hash may well have had an equally harmful effect on his association with reality. Drugs progressed from being a diversion to representing escape from the demands on his time. Playing onstage while stoned left him with little protective shielding. Though Waters states he never saw Barrett perform on acid, Syd smoked hash constantly.

The sound quality was often abysmal. Without onstage monitors, musicians heard a slap-back echo off the back wall, leading to a muddy sound and making keeping a steady beat difficult. Binson units often leaked oil or broke. The echoes stopped and the rubber transport wheel slipped off. Playback heads worked loose, distorting in screeching echo.

In hot clubs, the cheap plastic insulation melted, hit copper wire and went dead. Syd went from full flights to sounding raw.

Waters told *Melody Maker:* 'We've had problems with our equipment and we can't get the PA to work because we play extremely loudly. A pity because Syd writes great lyrics and nobody ever hears them. Maybe our fault because we are trying too hard. After all, the human voice can't compete with Fender Telecasters and double drum kits. Records we make are impossible to reproduce onstage so there is no point in trying.'

Pink Floyd found reproducing their intricate pop hits difficult. With growing reliance on the studio, sophisticated sounds were impossible to reproduce with the meagre technology at their disposal. 'We still do "Arnold Layne" and struggle through "See Emily Play" occasionally,' explained Waters.

The growing rift between the demands of the pop market and Pink Floyd's commitment to experimentation remained unresolved until the group stopped making singles some years after the departure of the one with the pop touch. The band's refusal to play hit singles earned them a reputation for being unreliable among the ballroom circuit.

In July, Pâthé Newsreels filmed a promotional clip for 'The Scarecrow', to be screened in cinemas. Pink Floyd paraded a scarecrow around Cheshire's Brereton Local Nature Reserve. Clowning and striking horror-film poses, they tramped through fields, hot and dry in the midsummer heat. The group look hardened by touring, leagues apart from the fresh-faced kids in the 'Arnold Layne' film. Barrett lopes along with a heavy gait as he carries a scarecrow aloft. At a brackish duck pond, Syd stakes the scarecrow in mud, backs away and stares – a haunting moment.

Being confronted with a reflection of his divided self mired in the lifeless mud might have proved too much for a man of paradoxical impulses. Syd was gripped by an irreconcilable duality, with endless paradoxes threaded through his nature. Rapt by this reflection of his unravelling, fragmenting self, 'The Scarecrow' was powered by anxiety – what philosopher Martin Heidegger defined as 'angst at forces unknown'. Syd's deep immersion in his work was both gift and curse. His creations were such inimitable extensions of self that his sanity can be said to have been bound up with the clarity of his output. His songs

determined his persona as much as persona determined his songs. This lack of division eroded his unsteady self. As Barrett's thoughts became disordered, his songs mirrored this turbulence with uncanny accuracy.

Genius is an overused word, though focusing on Barrett's downfall while forgetting his soaring flight does him a disservice. In ancient Rome, the genius was the guiding spirit of a person. Charles Baudelaire called genius 'childhood recovered at will'. Thelonious Monk held that a genius was one 'most like himself'. In James Joyce's *Ulysses* Stephen Dedalus says, 'A man of genius makes no mistakes. His errors are volitional and portals of discovery.' Genius veers across the fine line into madness when ideas can no longer be expressed. A genius expresses ideas a madman cannot. To the day he died, Barrett remained richly expressive.

Barrett's flow of ideas was bolstered by initial, mild drugs. Psychedelics offered a contrast from reality. The downside was that they also presented another reality to escape. Altered states brought forward subjective ideas tangled in supposition. Immense energy was spent explaining the uncomplicated. LSD amounted to a hall of mirrors, with each reflection a destabilising illusion mounted on another.

Whereas cannabis focused absorption on detail, acid expanded vistas to the extent that it fooled one into thinking what lay before them constituted a cosmos. Syd's eternal variations on a D chord exasperated the group. Barrett performed stoned while his bandmates might have had a puff or a half pint. The gulf frayed the band's collective spirit. Bonds formed in teenage years could not hold. Barrett refused to meet the group halfway. He declined to work out a set-list for gigs, missed rehearsals, or showed up late at the studio. Prone to distraction, the road crew ferried him to and from commitments. The other Floyds refused to get involved in an argument, instead resorting to backbiting and loaded jokes.

The drugs that opened Syd's doors of perception closed, one by one. Blurring fame with the erratic rhythm of tours, endless photo sessions and interviews, newspaper spreads, and groupies occluded Syd's vision. Syd was twenty-one when he became famous, an age when most have time to reflect on where they are going and whether they want to go there. There was no time for Syd. The others were two years older at an age when two years meant experience. His sister insists, 'He was very

pleased when he was playing to a small group of people and they would sing along, he loved that, but groupies, people wanting to be his friend because of the Floyd, he didn't understand.'

Trapped on a precipice, Syd could plunge into the unknown or turn back toward what he knew. Caught between childhood and adulthood, Barrett never had time to build a psychological framework. As his momentum increased, he longed for tranquil Cambridge, where on a walk through open green spaces one could muse and unwind. In London, Syd was a figurative world away from watching butterflies dart across Jesus Green. On rare visits back home, Syd and friends would decamp to the spacious grounds out back of Strangeways Research Laboratory down Worts Causeway, blowing bubbles in the grass, swinging on a swing under an oak tree, scampering about in full King's Road clobber. Barrett seemed tense and distracted, furiously strumming his unplugged silver disc guitar, stalking about, silent and uncommunicative.

His friends felt that he saw Pink Floyd as an adventure, not work. Too soon, Pink Floyd became 'the job'. An old maxim holds the difference between madness and genius is measured by success. Duggie Fields says, 'Fame was not something I thought was interesting. I can't have been the only one. Material success was not a goal, if it happened, it happened. Fame was not unusual in the world we lived in then. Fame and fortune were not seen as great goals of life. Living life was the goal. Fame was somewhat irrelevant. The media was seen as irrelevant. The media did not reflect our lives. The media did not inform and was not relevant. Not the same goal as people see it as now. I remember going to fancy restaurants without money, and being confident someone would pay the bill. It did not seem relevant who would pay. Those who did have money did not mind paying and did not begrudge if you were part of the group.

'You were part of the group for the vibe you gave out, rather than what you did, rather than what you said. The vibe, whether you had an empathy with the others. People made music, people created. That was the reward one did it for. For Syd in the Pink Floyd, "doing" and responsibilities became a chore. A problem. Syd was not doing it for the vibe. The vibe was not right for him anymore. He was doing it because he had to do it. Subversion by success is what happened to Syd. Resisting

that is difficult for any creative individual. Success destroys creativity as much as failure.’

10. SUMMER TEMPESTS

‘Like summer tempests came his tears.’

The Wind in the Willows
Kenneth Grahame, 1908

‘There are people of a certain instability who feel a constant urge to reverse themselves. There is danger in continually deserting the good because of uncontrolled desires.’

I Ching: Book of Changes
Chapter 24: Fû/Return – The Turning Point
Richard Wilhelm, translator, 1950

By summer 1967, the King’s Road was the most fashionable expression of the underground. Extending from Sloane Square tube station, ringed by the high-walled homes of upper class debutantes, down to the World’s End, the King’s Road dead-ended in low-rent Fulham, where secretaries’ bedsits overlooked the Chelsea football ground. A world of shops sat between. Stalls at Chelsea Antiques Market spurred the trend for vintage clothes and tourists thronged in profusion, rifling racks with rapacious glee. Curious onlookers flooded Chelsea, stalls at Kensington Market and threadbare wares of the vanished empire on Portobello Road.

Shopping trips included breaks at Picasso Café or Chelsea Kitchen for cheap food (and to score a crumb of hash) before another saunter down the road. ‘The Chelsea Drugstore on King’s Road was totally stainless steel and glass,’ recalls Firdsi. ‘The day they opened, we were all so damn high we ran around putting handprints all over it until owners had to set up a roadblock to keep stoners off. Everyone was a stoner. All London was higher than kites.’

Quorum, Hung on You, Flying Dragon, and Granny Takes a Trip dotted a landscape that new arrivals on the scene took for granted. All the much-vaunted classlessness and new plurality manifested in shop assistants 'who look just like their customers', as one guidebook trumpeted. Purple lace-up boots somehow indicated a free mind.

Frivolity and attention to superficial extravagance made vapid Swinging London seem trifling. Being a male model at Sir Mark Palmer's modelling agency was somehow revolutionary on a par with Che Guevara fighting in Bolivia. Journalist Sheila Rowbotham wrote: 'An upper-class bohemia had grafted onto the underground. Class snobbery merged with elitism of cool. The "do your own thing" individual liberation was turned into a justification of living completely for yourself.' Firdsi says, 'The constant posing was annoying. People like Suki Poitier and Anne Dunhill were posers to my mind. They looked down on those of us not rolling in daddy's money.'

'"Genteel" would be a word I would apply to the King's Road,' observes Peter Wynne-Willson. 'Although confluence of music, philosophy and clothes was certainly identifiable, the King's Road was a decadent aspect of the underground. Decadent in the literal sense. The King's Road represented decay of the hip philosophy.'

As the hip philosophy held by freak elites disappeared into pretension and preciousness, the underground was watered down for mass consumption. Clothes represented something far different from spring 1966, when a caftan and bell, crushed velvet trousers, silk kerchiefs and satin shirts marked the outer edge of a new dandyism – symbols of flamboyance and individuality, indicative of an open mind. Procuring garments meant considered advice at stalls in Chelsea Antiques Market, not to mention stares on the street, or outright abuse. By autumn 1967 a caftan and bell was a cliché ordered from *Disc & Music Echo* – a uniform punters rushed to buy. Caftans, like lifestyles, were slipped into like disguises.

In August, at a Festival of the Flower Children at Woburn Abbey, news photographers seemed to outnumber groovers, who loon-danced rather unconvincingly on the Duke of Bedford's lawn. The *NME* sneered: 'More than twelve thousand tinkling hippies and mods made the sad scene, went away unloved (boy-girl ratio: five to one), un-stoned (two

hundred constables prowled premises in search of pot), unmoved by fifteen jangling psychedelic bands.' The highlight was the marquee catching fire.

The following month, there was an open-air hippy fashion show in Fulham Road. The next month, the CIA-funded *Encounter* magazine published 'A Map of the Underground: The Flower Power Structure & London Scene'. The *Observer* prepared a 'Who's Who in the Underground' issue stuffed with photos and quotes from prime movers such as Hoppy, Miles, Joe Boyd, Pete Brown, Caroline Coon, and Mike Horovitz.

Underground players, locations and ideology were out in the open, and within range.

At UFO, participatory spirit gave way to a spectacle that was observed rather than created anew every week. As the first psychedelic bands hit the charts, Boyd could no longer afford them and resorted to booking second-division groups of questionable underground cachet, paid £25 with a £5 bonus if they filled the ballroom.

Floods of newcomers meant more hippies asleep on the floor at night's end. The original vanguard, in elitist pique, decried this invasion of their scene. They had good reason, for 'hip philosophy' did not translate well to the masses as it was powered by few concerns for money or prestige. As Peter Jenner noted to Jonathon Green: 'When there is no money being exchanged, the spirit is all.'

This 'vibe' also developed on hitch-hiking road trips, late-night cafés doubling as dope pick-ups, poetry readings with half-functional microphones and a monstrous amount of beginner bands in dank, cold halls from Eel Pie Island to the Roundhouse. Also around impromptu late-night jams at the dirt-floored London Free School root cellar and bonfires in Blitz-bombed houses under the rising Westway. Or else under the spinning overhead mirror where acidhead nudists spun visions at Jack Bracelin's, undergraduate jazz sessions down the student union and end of term tourneys through Majorca, Lebanon and Morocco. Or on skylarks to Grantchester Meadow, rambles across chalk hills and scattered together on various Greens and Pieces in Cambridge.

Now the underground was being co-opted. The mainstream media got interested and the profiteers moved in. Punters drawn not by egalitarian

peace and love but the prospect of easily obtainable drugs and free love arrived in droves.

The underground, and flower power, was also wilting from the inside. Dissension and drugs, more than most would admit, frayed the fabric of the underground. A mass influx of high-potency LSD and the first designer drugs like DOM ('STP') or DET made for dizzying sensory overloads. Hash chillums smoked in North Kensington flats were the least of Sergeant Pilcher and his hash hound's worries. Drugs flooded the underground and poisoned its well water. Doctor Sam Hutt says, 'I don't know if MDA, STP or others were around then or arrived in 1968. Amphetamines and Mandrax surely were.'

Mandrax was a strong soporific downer marketed as a sleeping tablet. 'Mandrax, which everyone was doing, was a cross between Quaaludes and acid that was phenomenal,' recalls Firdsi. 'Spanish downers, which I liked, and Moroccan speed called Maxiton all filtered around London due to being brought back in huge numbers by anyone who went out of the country. The biggest thing was hash.'

Pete Brown says, 'I had taken a lot of drugs until 1967 when I quit them all. I feel strongly with drugs a certain amount of conspiracy, if you like. People regarded aspects of the underground as a threat and made sure the underground got the drugs it did so it would fall apart.'

'Drugs of choice in London were different from the States,' explains Firdsi. 'Americans were doing acid, mescaline, peyote, and ubiquitous pot, all organic. Brits had the national health, and could fake an addiction and get prescriptions given us by the government. Heroin was predominant. It seemed like everyone was on smack, except for me. I never tried it. There was this bizarre rivalry between acidheads and Romilar freaks. [*Romilar, a cough syrup capsule, acted as a dissociative hallucinogenic when taken in high doses*] You would be on one, run into a pack on the other, and end up having peculiar philosophical arguments on merits of one over the other. Romilar was two kinds of synthetic morphine and bromides. If you took the pills, you would be fine. I tried drinking the syrup once. That was enough. The stuff was nasty in the extreme.'

Underground regular Susan Latham says, 'I was homeless and penniless, though young and not friendless. On the run from the bin but

treated as though I had the answer by poets, artists and musicians. To be someone on the run from electro-shock was to be a celebrity underground. It turns out I was mixing with a load of suicides and addicts though. The ones who made it were like gods with prized possession of what appeared to be sanity through it all. The answer closely combined with hard work. They had jobs in the underground.'

As the numbers increased, so did brazen theft and cries of 'sell-out!' to those who found success, from those who had not. Ticket-money theft from the poetry reading and the Dream demonstrated that not everyone on the scene was to be trusted. The old-school Beats had ethics culled from hard knocks and bad habits found on the road. A new social strata rose underground regardless of pluralist claims. Surprising how soon people gravitated toward old power structures.

Jean Cocteau stated, 'All revolutions go wrong within fifteen days.' Altruism became selfishness, pluralism snobbery, and consent dissension. Status symbols were once again drugs, money, fame and hip clothes, as at the height of Swinging London, and as they are today. Slavish affectations to surface sensation allied with modernism and ran rampant, hiding the hole at its core with peripheral trappings. The peace and love ethos masked an underlying nihilism. People on the scene changed in unpleasant ways. The brightest light was the first to go.

Jenny Fabian wrote of Syd: 'The others were worried about him. They muttered he might freak right out soon if he didn't watch it. They complained it was impossible to get new group things together with him in this state. I cornered Andrew, "Nobody's talking about it. We've been expecting something like this to happen. His mind is blown to pieces by all the acid he's dropped this summer. You won't be able to help him," he added, "though I wish somebody could."'

'See Emily Play' resounded from fairgrounds, boutiques, dances and radios across Britain. Syd had struck the public nerve. With the single soaring up the charts, the BBC rang Norman Smith and offered Pink Floyd a spot on *Top of the Pops*, BBC1's television hit parade show. A delighted Smith said, 'Oh yes, we would love to.'

National exposure on television was a tasty prospect, with *Top of the Pops* reaching fifteen million viewers. The weekly chart show was a

lifeline for millions who otherwise had no access to hip London bands, and influential in getting people into rock – as important as pirate stations or BBC Radio.

Smith summoned the lads and took them into Studio One at EMI. Relating the exchange to Alan di Perna, he said, 'You're going on *Top of the Pops* and here's what will happen. You won't be playing live. You'll mime to it. So what I would like you to do is set you up like they will in the TV studio and I'll play back "See Emily Play" to you. Mime it back to me. I want to give you some advice, because you've never mimed to a backing track. They accepted that. I thought, they won't be put off they're not doing it live.'

On 6 July, the Pink Floyd made their debut on *Top of the Pops*. Inane dancers, Pan's People, cavorted under blinking light bulbs and tatty Styrofoam on prefabricated walls. As host Alan Freeman gadded about, Barrett showed up at the last minute at BBC's Lime Grove Studio clad in psychedelic finery befitting a star of the scene. The group, with Norman Smith, marched into the dressing room. A bevy of stylists whisked them off to wash hair and apply stage makeup. As they returned, Syd was first through the door with hair styled and makeup in place.

Smith exclaimed, 'Syd, you look wonderful!' Barrett, without a word, turned to the large dressing room mirror and stared at his reflection – a rock god with Hendrix perm, satin shirt, velvet trousers, pantomime makeup and kohl-rimmed eyes – the Piper of the underground. For whom was the Piper playing? 'Rubbish! This is rubbish!' he cried. Grabbing tissues, he wiped off the makeup and scuffed up his hair. A speechless Smith thought, 'My godfathers, he's an awkward chap, this Syd Barrett.' Jenny Lesmoir-Gordon says, 'When Syd had all the makeup, long hair and green velvet trousers, that wasn't him. I don't think he was a "dresser". Syd was a nature boy. It didn't seem to be him, all dressed up.'

Dissatisfied with commercial pop, miming 'See Emily Play' under duress rankled with Syd. He would not forget it. Nick Mason told television presenter Mark Lamarr: 'Syd stopped enjoying it. He just lost interest, an ever-declining interest and enthusiasm. That's the unravelling, the rest of us were still hot to do it. Syd underwent a conscience crisis that this wasn't art. It was becoming so commercial with television and record sales, promotions, and he had been an artist.'

Peter Wynne-Willson says, ‘Syd was already dissatisfied with the way the whole group scene was going by the first *Top of the Pops* show. *Top of the Pops* seemed pedestrian and commercial. He needed a lot of smoothing to go to that. That would have been before any substantial amounts of acid. Although a common belief is it was an acid-induced problem, that was not necessarily so, unless he reacted badly to it.’

Peter realised that Syd was in trouble, beyond the usual freewheeling madness of the day. The look in his eyes was unnerving. ‘The first time I registered that was at *Top of the Pops*, that day. There had often been times when you would get a strange look in Syd’s eyes, just fleeting. Disturbed about *Top of the Pops*, what little he articulated was that he did not feel *Top of the Pops* was the thing they should be doing.’

Before show time, Jacques Allemand from French magazine *Les Rockers* arrived at BBC’s Lime Grove Studio as Pink Floyd rehearsed before the live broadcast. Syd introduced Allemand to Pink Floyd, who Allemand described as ‘quiet and polite’. Syd talked with Allemand. Torn, he played the pop game:

> Allemand: Do you intend to make more instrumental pieces like ‘Interstellar Overdrive’?
>
> Syd: Certainly. ‘Interstellar Overdrive’ came out on our first album in a different version than our French EP. It lasts nearly ten minutes.
>
> Allemand: Are you picking up any ideas from electronic music?
>
> Syd: Rather few. Our ideas generally come from ourselves. Now we are more concerned with visual aspects of our stage show.
>
> Allemand: Which are your favourite groups?
>
> Syd: Cream and the Beatles without a doubt.
>
> Allemand: Are you pleased with ‘See Emily Play’?

Syd: We did not like ‘Arnold Layne’ so much but are pleased overall with ‘Emily’. The same goes for the album. We are trying to get better and better and bring ourselves as near as possible to what we want to do. This is difficult enough, besides which we do not know what we want to do! Perhaps the second album will please us more.

The next evening, Pink Floyd played in Portsmouth. On the way home, Po Powell, acting as stand-in driver, drove back with Syd in the Bentley. No one wanted to ride or talk to him. Barrett smoked a joint, and had fits of nervous laughter all the way home under furious rain-swept skies.

On 13 July, Pink Floyd returned to *Top of the Pops*. Syd appeared in plain red shirt, black trousers and red shoes, staring into the middle distance with a serene if rather blank gaze. Norman Smith told Alan di Perna: ‘We were booked the following week for *Top of the Pops*. Back in we go again – didn’t bother with makeup and hair wash this time. Went onstage and soon as they started playback, the other three took up miming positions as though playing. Syd Barrett did not even put his guitar up. He just let it dangle low. He didn’t even put it up to look as though playing. Halfway through, he just dropped his head, looking at the floor. That’s how he stayed. I was very annoyed. I did have a go at him. I said, “You might have killed the chances of getting another hit.” He took no notice. I don’t know whether he’d started taking drugs. He became pretty vague after that.’ Smith added: ‘That finished any working relationship I had with Syd.’

Barrett soon channelled his irritation into ‘Jugband Blues’, a singsong taunting rhyme.

Pink Floyd were also filmed by the BBC at the Roundhouse on 9 July. A French fan says, ‘As it was filmed by television they didn’t have lightshow projections of coloured and heated gelatine. They did one of the maddest concerts I’ve ever seen. Nothing to do with well-run spectacular shows they would do in the next years. They played one or two couplets of songs from *Piper*, and each time unleashed wild improvisation, often dissonant, that went on for fifteen minutes. An unpredictable sonorous madness I found again, years later, with Can. Syd Barrett that night looked normal, perhaps high.’

After a one-day rest, Pink Floyd set off on their most logistically unsound round of gigs yet. First day, ninety miles east to Stowmarket, play the gig, ninety miles back to London. Next morning, two hundred and sixty miles north-west to Redcar, play the gig. A one-day rest, then next morning, drive to Heysham on the north-west coast of England for a three-and-a-half-hour ferry journey across a choppy Irish Sea to the Isle of Man.

There, Pink Floyd had the misfortune of playing during an invasion of alcohol-sodden Scots who arrived by boatload for the annual Scots fortnight. Massive fights broke out as they played, like a Celtic-Rangers game with bands playing. Nick Mason recalled his trepidation as he sat on the drum riser. Blood coagulated at his feet from where the previous group's drummer had been struck in the head.

They crashed at a bed and breakfast, and next morning flew two hours back to London crammed into a propeller plane. The plane dipped and rose in queasy lurches over the countryside, buffeted by strong winds. A shower and a shave, then a two-hour drive to a gig on the east coast of England.

At Gorleston, their PA system failed and they had to borrow the opening group's gear. The *East Anglia Times* reported: 'As stage curtains drew back the Pink Floyd launched into a shuddering opening number, sending decibels flying round the hall. Flashing green lights, the flashes linked to rumbles of guitars, burst around the group from all angles so that at times different shadows thrown gave the impression there was a whole crowd of people on the stand.'

Barrett kept close to friends and allies Susie Gawler-Wright and Peter, lifelines in a shifting whirl. Susie mixed oil for slides on sprung dance floors in old ballrooms. When anyone bounced near the projectors, the oils separated, giving the audience a trip all of their own.

Fan Anne Ross said, 'The Floyd's lightshow consisted of a guy in the balcony with a contraption that had some lights and a kind of windmill that turned around in front of them! You could hear the "tick tick tick" as it rattled round. All that psychedelic swirly stuff was projected behind the Floyd.'

Straight after the gig, group and crew embarked on a long drive to Scotland for one-nighters across the Highlands. They piled into the

Bentley at Great Yarmouth in the dead of night. They drove all day to arrive at a seaside hotel in Lossiemouth. Waters told *Disc & Music Echo*: 'I suppose it's odd, us being up here when we've got a big hit going. Still we're staying up here a couple of nights. Be a break really. No, the hotel people don't mind our clothes and hair. Think they'd be a bit disappointed if we didn't turn up in fancy dress.'

Barrett sat on the heath outside with the *Disc* reporter and said he enjoyed listening to Bob Dylan, Donovan, the Rolling Stones and the Beatles. He 'loved fairytales and outrageous clothes, and believed in total freedom'. He 'hated to impede or criticise others and hates others to impede or criticise [him]'. Syd also stated that he didn't care about money, and wasn't worried about the future.

On the surface, these were throwaway answers to a reporter's probing, Barrett implies being criticised and impeded. His assertion of not being worried about the future implies looming change. Espousal of 'total freedom' suggests not feeling free. In love with independence, freedom and originality, when things went wrong Syd's rebelliousness pushed him to the margins.

The Floyd stayed up until John Peel's Perfumed Garden beamed across the Highlands at midnight with surprising clarity, listened to a pre-release copy of Incredible String Band's *5000 Spirits or the Layers of the Onion*, then snatched a few hours' sleep. Mason and Waters ordered horses for riding, checked local fishing and golf. Then off to a gig at Two Red Shoes Ballroom, with locals primed to fight squaddies from a nearby RAF base.

Billed as, 'The group that brings its own lighting to set the scene oscillating and vibrating with *way out sets*!' Pink Floyd performed 'See Emily Play' under duress on the smallest stage yet. That night, one punter commented, 'The Pink Floyd were the worst group I have ever seen or heard… By the third number of unmelodic crap they were pelted by beer bottles and cans by almost everybody there and fled the stage in terror never to reappear.'

When Pink Floyd limped across Hadrian's Wall into Carlisle for another gig, they arrived three hours late. After another hour to set up, they played until 3:00am. After the gig, the promoter and heavies

informed them their take was £15 all in, versus their standard £300. They could do little but turn heel in fury.

Pink Floyd bounced from Glasgow to Greenock, with uncomfortable stays in bed and breakfasts where they slept two to a room in narrow beds with broken springs. Thin stained carpets reeking of disinfectant and dust lingered as they padded down halls to single bathrooms, fumbling in the dark for a solitary light. Psychedelic glad rags were thrown over faded armchairs, nylon socks dried on windowsills or the coughing pipes of a sputtering heater. Morning breakfasts of soggy bacon, white bread and milky tea were conducted in silence as they squeezed together on hard chairs, or else cracking jokes that Barrett was disinclined to respond to. Syd's defence strategy had always been to crack jokes and make the others laugh. Now he sat in stony silence.

All told, they played eight shows in eight days without a day off, covering two thousand miles by road and air in little over a week. Half their time was spent inside a van on a narrow two-lane road in the summer heat, crammed in uncomfortable seats, facing one another for hours on end. Weariness and ill temper led the quartet to pick on each other in backhanded ways, challenging one another to eating contests and other stupidities. As Pink Floyd travelled around Scotland, Barrett was fast becoming an object of contempt. Egged on to eat as many egg sandwiches as he could, the others watched as Syd stuffed his mouth until crumbs and egg trailed down King's Road finery into his lap.

As 'See Emily Play' peaked at Number Five in the *Melody Maker* chart, the music press announced the imminent arrival of Pink Floyd's next single, 'Old Woman in a Casket' ('Scream Thy Last Scream'), backed with '(She Was a) Millionaire'.

On 27 July, Pink Floyd performed their third and final stint on *Top of the Pops*. Sue Kingsford related a chilling account to Mark Blake in *Pigs Might Fly*. She and Jock were startled to hear pounding at the door of their new digs at Beaufort Street. They opened the door to find a bedraggled, dazed Syd standing there. Though Barrett often walked barefoot, even on London pavements, they saw his feet were bleeding on their doorstep. Kingsford said, 'He looked completely off his head, he didn't say a word.'

Shocked, the pair ushered their friend inside to the kitchen where they sat him down for strong tea and biscuits. Syd said nothing, sat at the kitchen table, folded into himself, unreachable. After an hour, Pink Floyd's road crew arrived and demanded to know where Syd was. Sue told them Syd was unwell, to which they responded, 'I don't give a fuck if he's not well.' Sue and Jock watched in disbelief as they picked Syd up and dragged him out. Trundling Syd into the van, they roared away to Lime Street Studios.

'When "Emily" was a hit and we were in the Top Ten for three weeks,' said Waters, 'we did *Top of the Pops*. The third week we did it Syd didn't want to know. He got there in an incredible state and said he wasn't going to do it.' A shocked Waters recalled saying to Syd: '[What] the fuck are you talking about? *This is it*, this is what we've worked all these years to achieve. This is the pinnacle of success and you don't want to do it. *You're mad*!'

Despite having come of age watching *Top of the Pops*, the show seemed a plastic, commercialised joke. Rick Wright agreed: '*Top of the Pops* was one of the worst things I did. Horrible to be on it, a real drag.' For Syd, *Top of the Pops* had nothing to do with his art.

Under the studio's blazing lights, BBC stagehands assembled the set designer's misinformed psychedelic set. Waters sat cross-legged on burnished steel pillars topped with plump oriental cushions, a space-age parody of Lewis Carroll's Caterpillar reclining on his toadstool. Waters wore a crimson suit with what appears to be gold curtain fringe sewn on the trouser hems. Mason and his drum kit sat up front, while Wright sat, imperturbable as ever, at the Farfisa. Clad in full pop-star clothes, Syd looked uncomfortable, pretending to strum the white Telecaster as he mimed.

Behind them, silver Mylar plastic sheeting stretched on frames reflected Pink Floyd, dancers Pan's People watched in bemusement, as technicians aimed the camera lens. All this was light years from Mill Pond dreams of being footloose, famous and fancy free, like Mick Jagger or John Lennon.

Sitting on a cushion because he couldn't stand up, Barrett found himself unable to escape this pop spectacle. Obliged to be there, in body if not in mind, Syd accelerated toward nervous breakdown.

28 July was an ominous day that began with little fanfare. Pink Floyd were to record a session for BBC Radio's popular *Saturday Club*, with eight million listeners. Producer Bill Bebb hustled about the studio inside the Playhouse Theatre with clipboard in hand. Limited two-track mono recording equipment, tight time schedules and austere BBC efficiency ensured recording ran along at a rapid clip. Pink Floyd had been there months before for their first BBC radio session, which went off without a hitch. The first discordant note rang when Waters, Wright and Mason turned up at the theatre.

'We had to do a radio show,' confirmed Waters. 'We were waiting for him. He didn't turn up.' Barrett had been late before. They carried their instruments in from the van. When Syd finally materialised, he seemed high and fraught. He launched into a tirade at his bandmates. They all fell to arguing about the *Top of the Pops* fiasco the day before. Bill Bebb told *Late Night* magazine: 'It must have been them having had some disagreement the night before, all shouting at one another. I just didn't get involved.'

As they began the first number, Syd found the ancient D12 microphones wholly unsuited to his quiet voice, forcing him to strain. Exasperated, he turned to Bebb and his bespectacled engineers and told them that their equipment was crap. A vexed Bebb shrugged and said that their gear served the Beatles well, and told Syd it would not bother him if they recorded or not. Bebb said, 'Syd hurled a bit more abuse my way, jumped off stage and walked out! The rest of the guys were embarrassed.'

Waters ran into Norman Smith, who'd just arrived. They asked the door attendant if he had seen Syd. 'I think he left,' shrugged the doorman. Waters jumped in, 'How long ago?' The door attendant said, 'Just a few minutes.' The pair dashed outside to catch sight of Barrett, hands in pockets, storming off around the corner and heading down Northumberland Avenue in the afternoon light, toward his one sure escape: drugs. He turned the corner onto Charing Cross Road and likely made his way up St Martin's Lane, less than a mile to 2 Earlham Street.

As night fell, Barrett walked in a kaleidoscopic blaze across Holland Park and appeared unannounced at Jenny Fabian's flat at 12 Queen's Gardens, Bayswater. Fabian wrote in *Groupie*: 'He turned up at my place

without any warning to take me to a gig, and looked ill. He wasn't speaking to anyone and his face was deathly white and beaded with sweat.' Like Hamlet appearing at Ophelia's chamber, Syd looked 'pale as his shirt, his knees knocking each other. With a look so piteous in purport as if he had been loosed out of hell.'

He sat in silence, muscles tense and rigid. 'He hardly spoke,' recalled Fabian. 'He would just tolerate me because I was so overpowered, so in awe I didn't really speak either.'

As curtain time for the show at UFO approached, Syd headed to Tottenham Court Road with Jenny in tow. In a cab, Piccadilly Circus' neon lights looked disturbingly vivid. This was the night of 'CIA vs. UFO', advertised by Hapshash's finest poster. English and Waymouth had been inspired by visionary architect Buckminster Fuller's view of the planet Earth as a spacecraft. In ravishing blue and gold inks, winged Arthur Rackham maidens pulled a fantasy island through space, from which flying UFOs emerged. Flags read 'Night of the UFOs', representing the conflict between a repressive establishment and the counterculture. A sold-out crowd of six hundred were packed in. Syd opened UFO's first night, now he arrived to close it.

The marquee above Berkley Cinema radiated with sickly lights flashing in staccato. Unsteadily, Barrett navigated his way downstairs, as though descending into an underworld. The heat of the room, doubled in summer, swept up to meet him. With conversations rushing around him, the eyes of onlookers glittered like dark, feral animals. Music spiking in and out of pitch from loudspeakers moaned and howled.

Two reporters from the *News of the World* preceded Syd and Jenny down the stairs. After paying £1 admission to an 'outrageously dressed flower girl with a bulging money box' the journalists ventured into the psychedelic dungeon. 'Heat, music, noise and smell hit us like a left hook. Nearly everyone had smouldering joss sticks, giving off sickly fragrance. A crude stage at one end of the hall, and old Charlie Chaplin-style films projected onto a curtain. Two different records were played at the same time, assaulting ears with discord. A youth nearby sprang up and began dancing on his own, sweat pouring down, eyes closed, mumbling, "Let it flow, man, just move with it."' The music stopped and a poetry reading began, which the reporters insisted was 'obscene'. 'A

young girl in a wheelchair, clutching a flower, took in the scene while her American girlfriend kept rolling back her head and opening and closing her eyes.'

The two hacks gaped in disbelief as a Dalmatian roamed through the crowd, sniffing around for something to eat. One ducked into the loo to find two young girls huddled under the sink, fast asleep.

By the time Syd and Jenny arrived, Fairport Convention had finished their set and the other Floyds were ready to go on. Working his way through the freaks, Syd staggered to the stage and shakily grabbed his guitar. His bandmates' silent contempt turned to shock at his electrified scarecrow appearance. The lightshow swirled like red skies at sunset splintering on the crowd below. The dazed audience seemed stuck in the same parallel dimension, eyes beseeching and spinning like pinwheels. The Flies and Brothers Grimm stood sneering along the back wall, pulverising his equilibrium with bad vibes.

Forming his fingers, rigid with tension, into A minor and G7, nervous energy rippled through his stiff limbs. Syd stared at row after row of freaks, dissolving and coalescing repeatedly in mockery of creation and destruction. The lightshow glittered like broken glass under a spotlight straight into his eyes, coloured ink globules invisible save for searing strobe light exposing him onstage. Playing 'Pow R. Toc H.' was the farthest thing from his mind. However, play they did, and Barrett tore into the set.

The *News of the World* noted: 'A group crashed on to the stage, discordant music belched from multiple stereo speakers set at full volume. Weirdly dressed men and women jerked to its rhythm. Thumping music was so loud the whole floor vibrated and violent coloured lights flashed in odd sequences.'

'In a cacophony of sound played to a background of multicoloured projected lights, the Pink Floyd proved they are Britain's top psychedelic group before the hip audience at UFO, on Friday night,' trumpeted *Melody Maker*, by way of contrast. 'In two powerful sets, they drew nearly every conceivable note from their instruments but ignored their two hit singles. They included 'Pow R. Toc H.' and a number that received its first hearing called 'Reaction in G' which they say was their reaction against their Scottish tour when they had to do 'See Emily Play'.

Bass player Roger Waters gave the group powerful depth and the lights played on to them set an impressive scene. Many found the Floyd's music too much to sit down to and in more subdued parts, jingling bells from their dancing masters joined in. Clearly the Floyd prefer playing to UFO-type audiences rather than provincial ones and are at their best in an atmosphere more acceptable to them.'

Jenny Fabian's account was more acute: 'Syd went on to play and I noticed halfway through the first set he wasn't singing and hardly playing a note. Waters was covering up for him well, so not many people noticed. After the first set, Syd said he wanted to get away from the club and sit somewhere quiet. We took a taxicab back to my flat, promising to return in time for the second set. He sat down and suddenly started talking about all the people who were now putting down the group because they had made it. I told him there would always be people like that.

'He believed the group had sold out. He couldn't reconcile what he wanted to do with what he was doing. Commercialism had nothing to do with being a religious artist, he said. I wanted to help. I didn't understand what was wrong. The best and grooviest musicians around. They could play where they liked and what they liked and still make more bread than they needed.

'In a position to experiment with new musical ideas, there was nothing Syd couldn't do if he had just half a mind to get it together. I just didn't understand it. It was as if his mind was burning up right in front of my eyes. I'd tripped and turned on, not enough to realise what he was going through. Enough to know what acid did to minds. This beautiful pop musician, shivering and pouring out his torture and miseries, was something else. He seemed to have lost touch with reality. There's no convincing someone like that. I kept silent and just listened. When it was time to go he rose without argument and we went back for the second set. This time he made no bones about his problem, or the effect it was having on him. He went onstage, silent, pale and sweaty again, and just sat on the floor with the guitar in his lap. He stayed like that for the whole set.

'Syd started to collapse on stage. He sat down during one number. He continued to play but he didn't look like he was going to go on for long

and then he just stopped playing and then he just lay down and I wanted to help him. I couldn't.'

Roger Waters said, 'More or less we did [the] gig without Syd. He may have been on the stage but we did it without him. He just stood there with [his guitar] hanging round his neck.'

'Syd arrived,' recalled Nick Mason. 'His arms hung by his side, with occasional strumming. That was the night of doing *Saturday Club*, the breakdown.'

The next day, 'See Emily Play' peaked at Number Six in the national charts. Pop stars across the realm, Pink Floyd took the underground into the Top Ten. Splashed across radio, television and *Fab* magazine, Barrett's vision became pop fodder. That night, the severity of Syd's breakdown was underscored. The night began poorly and ended worse. Unseasonal thunderstorms crashed across England, quashing summer with lashing rain.

Pink Floyd were scheduled to play two gigs, first at the miserable Wellington Club in the wilds of East Dereham, Norfolk, before racing to Alexandra Palace. They raced up the motorway in the Bentley, a shaken Barrett huddled and pale in the corner. At the football-fan-friendly 'Welly', the restive crowd was spoiling for a fight. The cinema balcony was split from the stalls to make way for the 'Sunshine Rooms' dance hall, formally the Wellington Club. With ill omens circling Floyd, their support band was called the Void.

Moments after Pink Floyd began playing under the meagre light show, the sullen crowd began chanting abuse. 'Fuck off! You're not playing no more!' The first empty pint glass sailed through the air. 'We had broken beer mugs smashing into the drum kit,' recalled Waters. 'I'll never forget that night. We did a double header that night. We played to a roomful of about five hundred gypsies, hurling abuse and fighting. Then we did the Ally Pally.'

After cranking out a ragged, truncated 'Interstellar Overdrive' to the violent drunken louts, the lads shook broken glass and beer from Mason's drum kit and threw their gear back into the van. Syd managed an autograph for a girl standing quietly in the rain, before they rushed at breakneck speed back to London.

The multi-act ‘International Love-In’ at Alexandra Palace had been hyped for weeks, with posters pasted on hoardings across London. The line-up was stellar, with Creation, Tomorrow, the Animals, Brian Auger and the Trinity (with Julie Driscoll) and Pink Floyd. Coming three months after the 14 Hour Technicolor Dream benefit, the Love-In was a commercial enterprise designed to cash in on the flower-power market. In a rip-off of Hoppy’s Dream, the stages, built weeks in advance, were an altar to commerce.

Organisers licked their lips at easy takings. A licensed bar advertised free food, though even flowers carried price tags at stalls scattered around the hall. There had not been a drop of alcohol served at underground events until now. Teetering punters streaked beer across the wooden palace floors.

Right from the start, bad vibes plagued the International Love-In. Faces were punched and heads butted by overzealous bouncers. Kit Lambert, manager of the Who, received a black eye. One attendee, James Vincent, wrote to *Melody Maker* capturing the feeling: ‘What a tragic experience the Alexandra Palace Love-In proved to be. The most horrible yobs I have seen in years massed for an orgy of sneering, jeering, beating and swearing, and as love, flower power and music were ground into the litter-laden floor of the palace, I felt here was the death of an ideal.’

NME’s Keith Altham characterised the Love-In as ‘punch-ins (bouncers versus “flowerpot men”), smash-ins (beautiful people in the car park), raid-ins (the police took away substances to be analyzed) and one stab-in. The main attraction was the audience, aged between seventeen and twenty-five. Some came with faces painted blue, yellow, or green, streaked by the torrential rain outside. Some wore floral jackets, some robes and brightly coloured scarves. Some wore beads and threw carnations about. Some came out of curiosity, some came because they believe and some because they thought it was an all-night orgy (and some proved it was!). There were too many selling love in brown paper packets. There were too many flower children with smiles on their faces and nothing in their hearts.’

The event showed how the shining golden promise of psychedelia had soured. After crowd-pleasers the Animals left, Pink Floyd got a bad reaction from hostile young mods crushed against the stage. For many,

the Love-In was their first encounter with the underground. Ian Macintosh was one of the curious, down from Oxford with his best mate, Terry. They got off at Wood Green tube station in the dark with rain slashing down. Macintosh wondered where summer had gone as they took a slow, damp walk up the hill to the palace. ‘As we approached, any depression we felt melted away. Ally Pally was alive with light. Several hundred damp souls gathered around waiting to go in. This was a show in itself – “blocked” mods in bright caftans twitching and chewing nervously, flower children with flowers in hair, petals on faces, carrying good joss, girls straight from a Rackham painting, older hippies looking contemptuously at younger heads, face and body paint, photographers, dandies, tramps, all standing in the rain, tinkling, and waiting.

‘From deep in the bowels of the palace, we heard instruments tuning up and sound-checking. Clear in my mind as though it were yesterday, cavernous Floydian organ runs. My mind was already blown. Suddenly, the hold-up cleared and we poured in, handing over £1 in coppers to an amused freak on the door – “I’ll trust you,” he said, and dropped the bread into the box. We were in!’

Macintosh entered to find a long stage divided in two at one end of the palace. Walls were covered from floor to ceiling with white sheeting, with projections swirling, flashing, and dissolving across.

‘Mark Boyle’s Sensory Laboratory blew some stunning liquid shows, a film of a baby in a bath running at one frame per second, avant-garde films, animations, flower motifs, kaleidoscopes, op art, strobes (including World War Two searchlight with strobe device attached), slowed down voices, vast industrial sounds, more liquids. Across two stages a vast montage of liquids revolved and pulsed – very prehistoric outer space. Sources for projections were high lighting towers positioned around the great hall. This was apocalyptic stuff for a young flower child. I felt an extreme revelation coming over me. This place and these people were emerging with a new tribal culture, language and symbols – from the underground. Just consider the semi-religious group names. You can sense the effect.’

The Creation followed Brian Auger and the Trinity, while Apostolic Intervention featured sixteen-year-old Jerry Shirley, later to drum on Syd Barrett’s solo albums. ‘The crowd – ten thousand wide-eyed, spaced

heads, TV crews, Yoko Ono happening,' recalls Macintosh. 'Tripping girls in states of undress playing with dolls, face-painted flowers, third eyes, OM signs. A market with *Oz, IT* and *Gandalf's Garden* on sale. Joss, joss and more joss, much smiling at strangers, and the music. We'd come to see the Pink Floyd. We saw so much more. Someone dressed as a cardinal did most of the MC-ing.'

After a set from Tomorrow came the Crazy World of Arthur Brown. Macintosh said, 'Arthur Brown was the manifestation of Celtic nightmare, wearing only a wretched loincloth, chest spattered in woad and silver face mask. He twitched and lurched onstage doing some manic shamanic dance. I was struck by the juxtaposition of vast liquid show behind the group, and this skinny creature – very pagan. Girls screamed as he removed his mask, revealing a face covered in black-and-white war paint.

'Unlike the Technicolor Dream three months before, the Floyd came on around 2:00 or 3.00am, midway through the night. Syd was just about first onstage, full Granny Takes a Trip costume and Dylan curls. Roger Waters was dressed in red flares and pink shirt, cutting an almost beautiful, mythical, bestial figure with lyre bass in hand. The crowd moved back from the stage – this trip was going to be loud. They hardly acknowledged the audience, solemnity pervading everywhere. They started with "Astronomy Dominé", and followed with "Pow R. Toc H.", when Rogers's lips grew into a maw-like appendage as he did his scream. All through this, the music was *great*, original, and evocative. The group just seemed to use the light show that was there… There was no "Arnold" or "Emily", each piece many minutes long, lots of improvisation. The Floyd inhabited a space all their own. There were no magic moments from Syd; it all seemed intense and workmanlike.'

Fan Andrew Brown said, 'The Love-In was the first Floyd performance I attended where I picked up any intimation all was not going well in the group, as they played a notably uninspired set – a real contrast to Games for May, where they were at their stunning peak.'

Psychedelic group Tales of Justine were hastily ushered onstage when Pink Floyd's set ended abruptly. Rick Wright said, 'Ally Pally was when we realised he'd really lost it.'

Syd's response to the Love-In debacle was to disappear into the rainy dawn. He went missing and no one could find him for days. Blackhill cancelled a gig at Torquay while the road crew searched in vain for Syd at Cromwell Road, Beaufort Street and Earlham Road. When he reappeared after the weekend, something was wrong.

'He went missing for the whole weekend and when he reappeared again on the Monday, he was a totally different person,' recalled Wright. 'When they [the road crew] found Syd, they told us, "Well, something's happened to Syd."'

'Something *had* happened to him, a total difference,' declared Wright. 'He took too much. He'd gone – still looking the same but somewhere else. They said, "Something terrible has happened, he's like a zombie."'

'The shock of seeing him, such a change,' Waters added. 'Very frightening. I couldn't believe what had happened […] because he came the next day, and he was a different person.' Syd was gone.

The other symbol of psychedelic London, UFO, was also in peril. The Piper of the Underground was about to lose his Arcadia. The *News of the World* published a stinging exposé on 30 July. Under the headline 'The Flower Children', the paper painted a vivid and hysterical portrait of UFO seen through the eyes of journalists determined to induce some form of moral panic.

When the shock exposé was published, Mr Gannon, owner of the Blarney Pub, was stunned. Though he knew full well what was going on, such media exposure proved too much. The local police leaned on Gannon to evict UFO. The exposé sealed it. The time-honoured Christmas case of whisky that served Fitzrovia bars well was not going to work. Police warned Gannon that if UFO opened there would be a raid and he stood to lose his licence. Chastened, Gannon rang Joe Boyd: 'I'm sorry, boys. I can't let you open on Friday.'

Though Beatles manager Brian Epstein offered the Champagne Room at the Saville Theatre, Boyd secured the far larger Roundhouse for a substantial fee. There was no time to change advertisements in music weeklies, much less *International Times* or *Oz*. Come Friday, Boyd and his staff stood outside the Blarney and told groovers to head to Chalk Farm, an inauspicious start for UFO-at-the-Roundhouse, which ran into one problem after another.

Steve Abrams's Society for Mental Awareness (SOMA) organised a response to Hoppy's imprisonment. Following on the heels of five thousand who gathered in Hyde Park on 17 July for a Legalise Pot rally, a week later a full-page petition surprisingly appeared in the conservative *Times*. The heading read: 'The law against cannabis is immoral in principle and unworkable in practice.'

Calling for decriminalisation, signatories included all four Beatles, psychologist R.D. Laing, photographer David Bailey, activist Tariq Ali, painter David Hockney, eleven medical doctors, a reverend, two members of Parliament, and author Graham Greene. The SOMA petition prompted immediate debate in Parliament, leading to the Wooten Report in 1969. New laws cutting sentences for dope possession were in place by 1971. By then, the state's punitive drug laws had already damaged many hundreds of young lives, and drugs had damaged many more.

Out on bail, Rolling Stones Keith Richards and Mick Jagger entered court to stand trial on drug charges. Amid a media circus, the defendants used their notoriety to their advantage. When they posted bail in May, they showed up in sober, tailored suits. At the hearings proper, Jagger and Richards arrived at court in Bentleys, wearing their most flamboyant apparel. In underground fashion's finest moment, the pair rose to the occasion. Keith Richards in a three-button pinstripe suit with flared bell-bottoms, white fake-fur coat, wide-brimmed fedora, and bubble sunglasses. Mick Jagger was resplendent in satin shirt and a Savile Row suit modified for a loose fit, his shaggy hair most assuredly uncombed.

The Stones marked the recess before sentencing on 29 July in inimitable fashion, by filming a promotional film for sarcastic new single 'We Love You'. Directed by Peter Whitehead, and banned by the BBC, they filmed an adaptation of 'The Trials of Oscar Wilde', with Mick as Oscar Wilde and Marianne Faithfull as Bosie, no less. Keith Richards sat dressed as magistrate, in spectacles and a wig of rolled tabloid newspapers.

The next morning, Jagger, Richards and Robert Fraser were given harsh sentences and trundled off to Wormwood Scrubs in handcuffs, where they nodded to Hoppy in the morning line-up. When William Rees-Mogg, editor of the *Times*, as Establishment as established got,

wrote an impassioned editorial, ‘Who Breaks a Butterfly on a Wheel?’, the two Stones were released and acquitted within thirty days, testament to an arbitrary application of justice.

Reunited, the Stones resumed work on *Their Satanic Majesties Request.* An album derided on release, which, like *Piper*, has been positively reappraised in subsequent decades. Standout track ‘2000 Light Years from Home’, written while Jagger was imprisoned, feels inspired by ‘Astronomy Dominé’, with its eerie Mellotron vamps and space-exile lyrics.

Scheduled to fly to Germany the next morning, Jenner and King could no longer deny that something was wrong with Syd. They decided to halt the bizarre spectacle, cancelling performances booked months in advance, including a high-profile appearance on German television show *Musik für junge Leute.* Hurried calls were made by the Bryan Morrison Agency to see whether Jeff Beck, already in Germany with his group, could cover for Syd. They decided not to go. The gig was up, and ‘the goose that laid the golden egg’, as one of his bandmates dubbed him, was exhausted.

All told, they lost £5,000 in bookings at a time when a hit single and an album release should have earned them a bundle. A Top Ten hit meant gig fees doubled. Ballroom promoters rang the agency non-stop to book them. The cancellations were a blow to the Floyd’s viability when the group should have been consolidating their success.

Syd Barrett’s breakdown began, with pointed irony, just as his greatest achievement was released. On 5 August, after six months recording, editing and mixing, the Pink Floyd’s debut album hit the shops. At Discordia in Notting Hill, shop assistants sold hundreds straight from the box to Portobello freaks. At HMV in Oxford Street, thousands were sold to teenage fans. Suffused with Syd Barrett’s brilliance, *The Piper at the Gates of Dawn* was a stellar achievement. At first titled *Projection*, Syd’s suggestion of a chapter title in *The Wind in the Willows* seemed the perfect fit. *The Piper at the Gates of Dawn* arced like a comet across the national charts for seven weeks, soaring to Number Six.

‘That was very difficult in some ways, getting used to the studios and everything,’ recalled Barrett. ‘It was fun, we freaked about a lot. I was

working very hard then. There [is] still lots of stuff lying around from then, even some of the stuff on *The Madcap Laughs*.'

His bandmates acknowledged Syd's commanding presence. '*Piper at the Gates of Dawn* was Syd. Syd was a genius,' Waters admitted. '"See Emily Play" and "Arnold Layne" were Syd Barrett's songs, right. It wouldn't matter who played bass nor did this or that, it's irrelevant. They're very strong songs and you just did it. It had nothing to do with the music, it has to do with writing songs and Syd wrote those songs. I don't think we were doing anything then.'

Rick Wright said, 'If you listen to *Piper at the Gates of Dawn* there are some extraordinary songs. That's what Syd did, an amazing person. Songs no one had ever written before, childlike wonderful stuff. I love listening to it, just to listen to Syd's songs. It's sad in a way as well. It reminds me of what might have been. He could have easily been one of the finest songwriters.'

The Piper at the Gates of Dawn marked a moment when all seemed possible in the world of the young – a lysergic summer where days seemed timeless. Unlike *Sgt Pepper's*, which brought psychedelic shimmers to the front in the mix, creating glittering clarity, or the inky darkness of the Pretty Things' *S.F. Sorrow, The Piper at the Gates of Dawn*'s thick, cloistered air, like a clearing in beech woods, dark and cool, pulls listeners in. A world within grooves, channelled from air into magnetic particles inside Studio Three. *Piper* is a soundtrack for magic hours at dusk and dawn, a hymn to secrets revealed. Listening to its tracks in sequence recorded does much to illustrate their composer's mindset and how his vision unfolded. Roughly, barring assorted overdubs, the recorded order was: 'Interstellar Overdrive' (French EP edit), 'Matilda Mother', 'Chapter 24', 'Flaming', 'Gnome', 'Stethoscope', 'Pow R. Toc H.', 'Scarecrow', 'Astronomy Dominé', 'Lucifer Sam', 'Bike', and 'Interstellar Overdrive' (second layer added).

From nursery to space, from dark rooms at Beaufort Place to Grantchester Meadows at dusk, the disc is a syncretised mirror of Syd's mystical vision. Clarendon Street's dope-filled rooms, busking in French campsites, acid trips in Kings College cathedral, rambles through the Gogs, bikes across the Pieces, foggy dew by the Cam. *I Ching*, Shelley's poetry, Radiophonic electronic gadgetry and dusty clocks, Fenland will-

o'-the-wisps, Victorian dollhouses and Arthur Rackham's fauns and nymphs. At the core, nimble acoustic strums at the Mill Pond. Finally, Pan and pipes amid blue skies. *The Piper at the Gates of Dawn* forms a world outside space and time, crystallising the brilliance of Syd Barrett. It is timeless.

Attuned to underground currents, Barrett's great contributions included restless experimentation and intuitive spontaneity. His whimsical and well-structured pop resonated with immutable magic. 'I've got too much to give to the world,' he said.

Roger Waters says, 'Syd was an extraordinary writer, there's no question.'

Despite its timeless brilliance, the album's cover was the worst in cod-psychedelia. Taken by photographer Vic Singh with a refracting lens given to him by George Harrison, it featured the band swimming in and out of focus, with wonky quasi-psychedelic lettering festooned below. With a wealth of underground designers at their disposal, EMI issued a botched in-house approximation. The album was released in two versions, monophonic and stereo, with different mixes. Barrett and the Floyd had a hand in helping fashion the mono edition, taking part in mixing certain tracks.

In mono, tracks evoking live performances like 'Pow R. Toc H.' and 'Interstellar Overdrive' benefited from having the rhythm section of Waters and Mason mixed to the fore, compressed so the midrange jumps with thunderous drums and bass. The stereo version of 'Interstellar Overdrive' has the rhythm section mixed to the right channel, while the melodic team of Wright of Barrett is on the left. The split in stereo mirrors the split in Pink Floyd. An edge seeps into tracks from contention, musical and personal, between two sides of the group.

In a feat of engineering, Norman Smith and classical engineer Graham Kirkby finished the stereo mix in nine hours. The stereo *Piper* has great resonance, with wide horizons of reverb, echo and chorus, save for the tail end of 'Interstellar Overdrive'. To convey return to Earth, the track panned in a violent left-to-right sweep at the explosive finale. This shattering re-entry amplified the return from improvisational space, though the gruesome panning made for the single most ham-fisted effect

in the psychedelic canon, as Smith mixed left to right with a specially built pan pot. In the 2007 re-master, the panning was expunged from the record.

Panning was put to better use on ‘Lucifer Sam’, where Smith and Bown dialled sensitively to create a sense of disorientation. Overproduction on the stereo mix demonstrates the delight producers and engineers took in experimenting with new technology. In stereo, heavy echo is added to Nick Mason’s drums, also flanging, reverb, limiting and chorusing on every vocal, guitar or organ part. The ‘more is better’ ethos could have benefited from some restraint, though psychedelia was hardly about holding back. Musicians and technicians united in pushing limits, open to experimentation.

Remarkably, the stereo mix was an afterthought. Kevin Ryan, author of *Recording the Beatles*, says, ‘Stereo was not something EMI staff or artists concerned themselves with when recording pop music. Stereo mixes were a nuisance to engineers, and they did them at the last minute. Mono mixes were the main concern. Mono mixes were the currency of pop music. Heard on the radio and in the bedrooms of most teenagers. Stereo, especially in Britain, was for novelty hi-fi purists – a vastly smaller market.’

In mono, mixes sound ‘fat and flat’ while stereo has more separation and depth. That said, in early stereo mixes, the middle zone between channels often sounds empty. Engineers still had to work out how to pan channels to fill the stereo spectrum. The spaciousness on the stereo edition of *Piper* came from EMI’s superlative electro-acoustic echo chambers and EMT plates, remarkable for their depth. Ryan points out that the wide stereo picture resulted when all content is shoved off to one side or the other (and from ADT), creating exaggerated space and depth.

Ryan says, ‘When listening to *Piper*, there is almost nothing in the middle of mixes. Everything lies to the sides of the sound stage. These are mono tracks hard panned. Mild stereo image may result on *Piper* songs when there is bleed between live sources on separate tracks. So, the guitar track [on track one and panned hard left] might have live bleed off drums [on track two and panned hard right]. Similarly, the drum track might have bleed off guitar. When tracks are panned this way, a sense of space results. The stereo effect here was an accident.’

‘Syd was the main writer, and [it was] a pretty difficult job with Syd,’ asserted Norman Smith. ‘Syd used music with lyrical phrasing or lyrics with musical phrasing. A statement being made at a given time. If you came back five minutes later to do another take, you probably wouldn’t get the same performance. You probably wouldn’t get the same tune or musical composition. It made editing impossible. We went through quite a few of Syd’s songs. Difficult to figure out which I liked and which I didn’t like, so we’d come back to them and maybe try those songs again. This made it even more difficult – a slow, unwinding process.’

Though Smith eased ideas, however bizarre or tangential, into concrete form, he lacked Barrett’s trust. He did not much trust Barrett’s instincts and his patronising manner might have antagonised Syd in such a way that it brought out the best in him.

The ability to map dynamic peaks and troughs show Barrett as possessing great sensitivity when making music, and also in his personal life. For Syd, drugs accentuated his sensitivity, in moderation spurring creativity, in excess paralysing it. Drugs, rather than acting as a will to power, became an escape from meeting demands. Even then, he found he could not escape.

For a week, Barrett laid low at Cromwell Road, suffering from nervous exhaustion. Lindsay Corner found reaching him difficult. Long discussions seemed to clarify things, only for Barrett to lapse back into silence, listening to John Peel on Radio London. Lindsay maintained that after the success of the singles and album Syd began to ‘act a little bonkers – staring at corners and things’.

Corner did her level best to help, though she found Syd unreachable. A snap in the weather sent temperatures tumbling. Summertime highs dropped to forty-degree days with wind, rain and clouds. With the world at his feet, Syd hid inside Cromwell Road.

‘You can’t put a date on when Syd broke down,’ observes Jenny Fabian. ‘Just gradually, you noticed things. Time was timeless then. He started going onstage and not playing. Sometimes he’d play a bit and then sit down, or sometimes just stand there. I never heard him say much, so I must have come in toward the end. Yet Syd still felt the same.’

Dissociation is a psychological state where emotions separate from the psyche in a defensive response to trauma. Derealisation, is an alteration in perspective where the external world seems strange or unreal. With drugs, sleep deprivation and stress precipitant factors, chronic derealisation may be caused by occipital-temporal dysfunction. A common effect is recurrent *déjà vu*, captured in the Roky Erickson song, 'I Have Always Been Here Before', or *jamais vu*, a feeling of 'I have never been here before'.

In the three years since he had come up to London, so much had happened to Syd, so quickly. Get to the studio, set up, work, and then play in clubs. His balance was battered, and the first flush of fame turned sour.

Pink Floyd returned to Studio Three to record their third single on 7 August. It was due for release in a month. The harrowing 'Scream Thy Last Scream' and Waters's meditative 'Set the Controls for the Heart of the Sun' were recorded in haste. These two days of sessions marked a pivotal juncture in Pink Floyd's timeline; the end for Barrett's Pink Floyd and the birth pangs of the Waters-led Pink Floyd Mark Two.

When Barrett presented Pink Floyd with 'Scream Thy Last Scream' Jenner and King thought the song was marvellous; an extension of dark fairytale-derived songs rather than an expression of madness. Barrett was unable or unwilling to sing, so 'Scream' featured Nick Mason on lead vocal on track three and secondary double speed vocals on track four of a four-track tape.

Mason followed Barrett's demo closely, copying Barrett's affectation of unrounded East Anglian vowels. One rhyme echoes the similar compounded rhyme in 'Bike', sourced from children's nursery rhyme 'Mr Nobody' and the 1936 children's book *In the Mouse's House* by Lois Donaldson.

Mason bellows a tart, camp approximation of an annoyed mother. Vocals sped up with frequency shifting were reminiscent of Waters's high-pitched vocal gibberish on 'Embryo' and suggests that the bassist had a hand in the vocal arrangement.

In a sonic spectacle, with crowd noises from the EMI sound library echoing across the spectrum, Wright plays some of his best Farfisa organ,

as Mason pile-drives in accelerating martial rhythm. The production is intricate; each compounded motif evolves into the next under the weight of antic precision and stifled panic. The song might strike the casual listener as chaotic, though much work and fevered thought went into creating it.

Barrett's most menacing song, 'Scream' was a volatile brew documenting his breakdown with chilling clarity. A sprawling barrage of bells and crowd noises layered the background. The shadowy high-pitched vocal leapt, sometimes synchronised and sometimes not, spiralling into a void. Further skewing the *falsetto* shadow vocal was a comic – if sinister – choir of giggling, elf-like sounds. This echoed the gibbering voices on 'The Return of the Son of Monster Magnet', where Zappa invited half of Los Angeles' freak scene to bang on percussion and chant. The track reached its crescendo with sound effects of a train leaving a station, as comedy and horror raced along the platform.

'Scream' brimmed with sudden tempo changes. Wright's watery organ counterpoints Mason's quickening drums, as Waters drives along on bass like a steam train gathering speed. Wright plays in an aqueous, burbling Farfisa style, prominent in the mix, displayed across 'Scream' and the later 'Beechwoods' and never toyed with again. Using the tone and pan controls of the Farfisa in league with the wobbling Binson, the usually restrained Wright allows himself room to freak-out. Within the year, he gravitated toward the tremolo heavy Hammond M-102 organ. After 'Any Colour You Like' in 1972, Wright packed away the Farfisa for twenty years. Wright's role was prominent as Barrett disintegrated, his grasp of musical structure shoring up shortfalls in Syd's playing.

A tremulous, doom-laden guitar solo marks the midpoint, sounding like a train changing gears. Barrett let loose with inspired guitar lines, though ones that threaten to veer out of tune and out of time, strung like thin wires across a chasm. The guitar solo in 'Scream' pirouettes at the lip of an abyss, as Barrett drags the beat in time-defying lurch to a crumbling apex.

Delving deep into the quagmire of nightmares ringing throughout fairyland, 'Scream' was closer to *Grimms' Fairy Tales* than *The Wind in the Willows*. Its origins may be traced to a fairytale, albeit a dark one. Thumbing through *Orange Fairy Book* by Andrew Lang (1906), a

compilation of fairytales from around the world, Barrett found ‘The Two Caskets’.

A Scandinavian fairytale, ‘The Two Caskets’ told of a selfless stepdaughter who works tirelessly for her wicked mother. The tale was a popular archetype, with dozens of variants, ‘Cinderella’ being best known. The other variant was the Brothers Grimm’s *Hansel and Gretel*, where Gretel stuffs the wicked old woman into her own oven and locks her in, and which Duggie Fields recalled Syd reading at Cromwell. The old woman’s last scream comes as she is incinerated.

Another of Syd’s childhood insertions was the jolly Dame Washalot from Enid Blyton’s *Magic Faraway Tree*. Washalot spent all her time washing clothes, scrubbing on all fours, and throwing her dirty wash water down by a tree. In a singsong nursery rhyme couplet, Syd blends the dutiful stepdaughter in ‘The Two Caskets’ with Dame Washalot.

As the seams in Barrett’s songwriting opened, his inspirations became more apparent. Syd utilised compounded internal rhymes, rhyming sounds in the same line for effect. Nursery-rhyme meter runs headlong into psychotic clang associations. Free-form verse turns to acid doggerel. ‘Scream’ is a good example of what Jenny Fabian called ‘messages from a freaked-out fairyland’. Obscure referents and aberrant associations shot up from between cracks in Syd’s world.

One of the song’s lines recalled a traditional Guy Fawkes Night poem: ‘*Sing hiddle diddle diddle/ What’s the answer to the riddle/ Of the bent bow…*’ In Scottish border ballads, ‘hiddle’ meant to huddle, and ‘diddle’ to play a fiddle. In old East Anglia, ‘diddle’ meant ‘to waste time in merest trifling’. Jig and reel overtones pepper the song’s skewed structure, as waltz-time intrudes in sporadic commotion.

The imagistic discontinuity found between lines stems, at least in part, from the discontinuity in nursery rhymes. Often nursery rhymes present facts and scenarios without grounding them in any formal structure, either in narrative, or poetic forms. People, places and things are presented in nursery rhyme as *fait accompli*. The unspoken subtext is all. Andrew King commented to Cliff Jones that Barrett’s lyrics reflected ‘the slightly dislocated meter of poetry in translation’.

The chords in ‘Scream’ waver between minor angst and bright majors, with brittle twanging melancholy underscoring the mood of ambivalence.

The vertiginous rise and compounded drop in the first line is in sharp contrast to the airy indeterminacy of the second. Here, whimsy skips along with repulsion, as Nick Mason affects the voice of an old crone.

Verses mimic choruses but there is no gravitational centre to ‘Scream’, much as ‘Sing a Song of Sixpence’ is beholden to its internal rhyme rather than a definitive chorus. In adventures underground and out of his head, Barrett tapped into the raw and primal side of his own psyche. Some of what he found was sinister. Spiteful gales of forced laughter mask the underlying theme. Doctor Sam Hutt, in the studio that day, on LSD, recalled to Mark Blake his dismay as he watched them record: ‘Oh no, here come the demons.’

Overproduced, like the best psychedelia, ‘Scream’ mirrors an overload of sensory stimuli, reflecting the disorienting after-effects of acid, where nothing feels as it should. ‘Scream’ charts the gruelling comedown after the high. ‘Scream Thy Last Scream’ and its companion pieces ‘Jugband Blues’ and ‘Vegetable Man’, recorded soon after, mark a middle passage where Syd began to jettison his craft, and scatter jewels round the wild wood.

Widely available, ‘Scream’ and ‘Vegetable Man’ remain officially unreleased. Barrett fans have long grumbled that Pink Floyd buried these dark jewels. David Gilmour remarked, ‘They’re difficult to assess because they were recorded before I joined. “Scream Thy Last Scream” was sung by Nick Mason. I can’t relate that to Syd sounding at his most desperate – “Vegetable Man” a bit more so. I have no objections at all to those songs being released. It’s up to the others.’ Tawdry now, like closet skeletons, an official release is improbable. The mocking laughter in ‘Scream’ does little to suggest that Pink Floyd helped as Syd fell apart.

Cited by some as first irrefutable sign of Barrett’s madness, ‘Scream Thy Last Scream’ finds a parallel with ‘I Am the Walrus’ by the Beatles. Recorded a month later, it also displayed coruscating free-verse rants, disjointed imagery and unorthodox arrangement. Both songs mirror the dislocation of LSD in meter and rhyme. Written in the aftermath of the 14 Hour Technicolor Dream, they are not so much acid-inspired as acid-saturated. Barrett and Lennon were deep in the well of psychedelia, plumbing the acid experience for these chilling gems.

In sharp contrast came ‘Set the Controls for the Heart of the Sun’, recorded on 8 August. Roger Waters’s masterful ambient work was first performed earlier that summer. Borrowing a page from ‘Chapter 24’, Waters set about creating an extension of that song’s Eastern airs. The descending vocal chant was culled direct from Davey Graham’s ‘Majoun’. The central bass riff echoed Jimmy Garrison’s bass soloing on ‘Introduction to My Favourite Things’, from John Coltrane’s album *Live at the Village Vanguard Again*. Mason also did an inspired take on hero Chico Hamilton’s ‘Blue Sands’. Like ‘Remember a Day’, a sister piece, ‘Set the Controls’ is a modal exploration based on E.

If ‘Scream’ was madness, then ‘Set the Controls’ was a meditation on madness. Its steady pulse and strong tonal centre act as a call for return to order, the tonal inverse and diametric opposite to ‘Scream Thy Last Scream’’s mad fanfare.

‘Set the Controls for the Heart of the Sun’ is Pink Floyd’s first stab at sustained atmospheric pulsing drones. The deft melody is underscored by a filigree of striated organ. A pulsating bass line rides under whispered mantras in subdued intensity. This sound format expanded when Gilmour joined, and guided Pink Floyd through their late-sixties albums *More* and *Meddle*.

‘Set the Controls’, like its antecedent ‘Nick’s Boogie’, laid the cornerstone for ‘Saucerful of Secrets’ and ‘Echoes’, illustrating a switch from what critic Simon Reynolds identified as Barrett’s Dionysian frenzy to Waters’s Apollonian sound-as-structure. This contrast marks the schism between their respective visions. Barrett’s atonal, arrhythmic and intuitive experiments were in marked contrast to the tonality, constant pulse and analytical thrust of later Floyd.

Through hypnotic invocation, a simple bass motif emulates the relentless momentum of a doomed spacecraft. Ignoring the forgettable ‘Take Thy Stethoscope and Walk’, it was Waters’s first significant composition. Borrowing from Barrett’s *I Ching* adaptation on ‘Chapter 24’, Waters took verses from a Penguin paperback of Chinese poetry, *Poems of the late T’ang*. Waters borrows a succinct line from 9th-century poet Li He’s ‘Don’t Go Out of the Door’, which appeared in the original poem as: ‘*Witness the man who raved at the wall as he wrote his*

questions to Heaven.' An image particularly pertinent to Syd ensconced at Cromwell Road.

With a title lifted from William Burroughs's *The Nova Express*, Waters was inspired by reading science-fiction author Michael Moorcock's 1965 science-fiction book *The Fireclown*, in which a charismatic anarchist demagogue, the Fireclown, shakes the status quo until those in power decide they should go to any lengths to stop him gaining more influence. Waters explained the song as tale of 'an unknown person who, while piloting a mighty flying saucer, is overcome with solar suicidal tendencies and sets the control for the heart of the sun'.

In hindsight, the song can be viewed as a meditative allegory on Barrett's internal implosion, an interstellar voyager turned astral kamikaze. There seems little doubt who was piloting the ship to destruction, or who was determined to wrest away the controls in order to save it.

Capitulating to chaos, Jenner and King sent Pink Floyd off on a two-week summer break. A holiday in the sun, they naïvely reasoned, might help. There was a fear that sending Syd to a doctor for observation might lead to his being sectioned in a mental hospital. They rang their old Cambridge and Westminster colleague, Sam Hutt, and asked him to intervene.

Hutt acted as MD to half the underground, a musician who was also a trainee physician, and dispensed penicillin shots for Ladbroke Groovers with rampant syphilis. Tickets were booked to the Mediterranean Balearic Islands, off mainland Spain. Barrett and Lindsay, with Rick and Juliette Wright, flew to sunburned Ibiza on 9 August. Landing, they travelled to nearby Formentera by ferry, accompanied by Hutt, his wife and infant son.

The jaunt had all the makings of Victorian farce – an English gentleman with a nervous complaint travelling to a foreign clime accompanied by his medical doctor. Once there, a traumatised Barrett tried to puzzle out his problem under the burning sun, cast adrift in limbo, becalmed in the doldrums. Hutt told Jonathon Greene: 'Syd Barrett came down with me, and stayed with us… They get spectacular

electrical storms in the Mediterranean and poor old Syd was climbing the walls.'

'The idea was to get Syd out of London, away from acid, away from all his friends who treated him like a god,' explained Wright to presenter Mark Lamarr. 'Clearly much more serious than we thought, because he couldn't respond, he couldn't communicate. He couldn't do anything in Formentera. He had nightmares – real living nightmares, trying to climb walls. The biggest change for me, his eyes used to have so much life in them and then just went dead. We were all hoping he was just burnt out and needed a complete break. It clearly was much more serious. Very scary, very upsetting.'

Waters and girlfriend Judy Trim took the ferry over from Ibiza. Photographed on the beach at Migjorn, Barrett sits on a wooden bench at a beachside hut, legs and arms rigidly crossed. Rail thin, Syd wears a tie-dyed blue shirt with white splotches, hair cast in an electrified halo round his head, looking every bit the scarecrow. Casting a disconcerting stare at his bandmates and their girlfriends relaxing on the sand, Barrett appears miles from any involvement.

Photos show him playing a flute while reclining in the sand, head propped on his arm, sunk deep inside his own thoughts. Stiff and expressionless, with beleaguered eyes focused in the middle distance, Syd looks shell-shocked. Skulking off to sit under a wind-gnarled Sabina juniper tree, Barrett played Hutt's sitar for hours without a word to anyone.

'Syd was having a breakdown mostly from raw hypersensitivity to constant industrial quantities of psychedelics with no let up,' Hutt explains. 'Why he broke down where others did not, I do not think can be explained with medical metaphors or possible but unconfirmable diagnoses. Suggestions of syndromes and temporal lobe seizures are all very well but are conjectural. Who knew? He took too much for too long without letting up. Most of us had rests and meditations as suggested by folks like Timothy Leary and Baba Ram Dass, which gave us chance to review and reflect. Syd just jumped back on the merry-go-round with all its yawning chasms before he could touch what we laughingly call reality. Nothing is concrete.'

Barrett was lurching toward a nervous collapse. His blank, vacant facial expression and inability to express emotion is symbolic of what psychologists call ‘affective flattening’ or the ‘blunt affect’. Loping along barefoot, he stood gingerly on the balls of his feet, perched as though the floor were electrified. Hypersensitive; noises were too loud and lights too bright.

Syd often sat by the window staring, seemingly in deep thought, with infrequent blinking. Other than trembling hands and jerky limbs, his posture was rigid. One night, Barrett left the others to roam the winding alleys of deserted Sant Francesc Xavier. Syd ended up sleeping under the stars amid the whitewashed municipal cemetery tombs.

As his magic songs spun on turntables across Britain, and Floyd’s album sat in the Top Ten, no one outside their immediate circle knew where Syd had gone. Jenny Fabian was told he was sent off on holiday, while rumours spread that he’d left Pink Floyd or was hospitalised. On 12 August, Pink Floyd made the front cover of *Melody Maker* for the first time, though for the wrong reasons. An enormous headline trumpeted ‘Pink Floyd FLAKE OUT!’, with an inset photo of a startled Barrett. The *Maker* reported: ‘Pink Floyd lead vocalist and songwriter Syd Barrett is suffering from “nervous exhaustion” and the group have withdrawn from all engagements booked for the rest of August. As a result, they have lost £4,000 worth of work. A group spokesman said they would resume making appearances in September.’

At the seventh National Jazz and Blues Festival, Pink Floyd were scheduled to play near the top of the bill. Just a year before, Syd and Po attended as fans. Cream, Small Faces, the Move, Arthur Brown, Donovan, Jeff Beck, John Mayall’s Bluesbreakers, and the debut of Peter Green’s Fleetwood Mac mapped the future of British rock. At the festival, the first thousand-watt PA system blasted across the meadows, heralding the new rock age with explosive volume.

The festival was a Valhalla of British guitar gods – Clapton, Beck, Peter Green, Steve Marriott and Mick Taylor among them. Barrett could have consolidated his leading position as guitar experimenter. Instead, he slept in cemeteries. Like the Beach Boys no-show at the Monterey Pop Festival, an announcement stating that the Floyd had cancelled brought resounding boos.

In their absence, Pink Floyd featured in *NME*'s spurious 'Lifelines' column, detailing various likes and dislikes. The group nominated the Beatles, Béla Bartók, Cream, Thelonious Monk, Jimi Hendrix and Rolling Stones as favourites. Waters turned in sarcastic asides, citing his musical education as 'twelve years tuition on the spoons'. Barrett refused to answer everything but the odd question or two, one being the name of his cat ('Rover'), another his favourite beverage ('Campari and soda'), otherwise his questionnaire featured line after line of resounding blanks, a hexagram of silence. He adopted silence as protest, and disengaged in stubborn defiance. His inner resolve shaken, and distraught over a situation he felt powerless to change, Syd withdrew.

Barrett sat for a rambling, stoned interview with visiting American radio journalist Tom Lopez (known as 'Meatball Fulton'). Syd told Lopez: 'I feel now that having left art school there are a lot of things that I could do. A lot of things I see now, a lot of things went into me, into my head and thinking. Changing and altering things. For instance, I made a painting the other day and it's as if I could I see and hear very clearly different instructions and different criticisms going into the picture which were in fact criticisms that I could relate back to art schools and teachers and various things that'd come at that time. So… maybe… this would be very valuable, this break. I don't know. To try painting again after a break of going into pop music and playing this sort of music just might work out that [I] get more basic freedom.'

Stubborn when forced into a corner, freedom was Barrett's grail. He *had* to do what he wished, regardless of the consequences. Lopez asked Syd, 'Do you ever get frightened by the feeling you'll never be free, that you'll always be a prisoner?' Barrett replied, 'Yeah, I do.' Lopez said, 'My impression was he had been taking a lot of LSD trips. His eyes were so open it was like looking into a tunnel, there were no barriers. I had to stop myself tumbling down inside him.' Impressed by the bottomless cavern of Barrett's eyes, Lopez asked Syd for his impressions of him:

> Lopez: I mean like, your impression of me, which you must have… would you care to tell me? Be, like, absolutely honest… Do you have one?
> Barrett: In words?

Lopez: Yeah.
Syd: (Long pause) Um… *wow*.

Lopez hit a raw nerve when he asked Syd, ‘Do you find yourself in patterns, constantly repeating the same things over and over?’ Syd replied, ‘Mm,’ and lapsed into silence. ‘What are you working on inside yourself?’ asked Lopez. Irritated, Syd said, ‘Yeah, I can’t really say. It’s obviously taking too much time to think about… Not really difficult.’ Total silence followed for thirty seconds, as cars outside echoed around the room. A flummoxed Lopez stated, ‘I feel you’re holding back.’ Syd replied, ‘Yeah.’

The recording has a feeling of morbid tension throughout, with Lopez trying to ask empathetic questions and being stonewalled by Syd, who seems to be stifling tumultuous paranoia. After granting Lopez a decidedly ambiguous ‘very strange to meet you’, Barrett closed by announcing his plan for the next months: ‘if I wanted to say nothing or if I want to act in an extraordinary way, then I feel that that too is justified’. Some argue Syd was not mad at all, believing instead that he was determined to drive his bandmates, producer and managers mad.

In his rare free moments, Barrett visited Anthony Stern’s flat in Battersea. Stern related that they discussed Hamlet’s ‘antic disposition’ at length. In Shakespeare’s tragedy, Hamlet returns home to find his father dead. Still in mourning, his mother marries Hamlet’s uncle, Claudius. Hamlet meets the ghost of dead King Hamlet, who explains that Claudius murdered him in his sleep. Shocked, Hamlet affects an ‘antic disposition’, acting as if he has lost his mind. If the Danish court believes him insane, they will leave him to plot his revenge. Hamlet explains, ‘I perchance hereafter shall think meet to put an antic disposition on.’ Barrett set out on his own antic disposition over the next months. Feeling justified ‘to act in an extraordinary way’, Syd’s performance proved devastating.

‘English youth is changing,’ declared Barrett to an Italian reporter. ‘For us the Beat bands make no sense anymore. Our generation has become aware rebellion is useless when society annexes it into the consumer society, as it has done with Beat bands. Where the rebel is not one who protests but dresses in a particular style. Now English young

people have decided to take advantage of, and not to be taken advantage by society and its products. Now it's not important how you dress. Clothes are indeed a return to elegance, refinement, and feelings you get with drugs. Drugs are dangerous while the music and lights we use are not. This is the reason we've met with such quick success. We're giving young people new sensations. We help them set them free, to calm them – without chemicals.'

Underground, a state of emergency prevailed. The counterculture was under siege, with its main newspaper raided, primary venue almost shut, Hoppy in prison, and Syd with a blown mind. Next, pirate radio was silenced. Parliament passed legislation to shut stations broadcasting off Britain. The Maritime Offences Act was ratified in a wave of hysteria.

On 14 August, pirate disc jockeys played their final sets. The first great wave of British pop was over. When pirate DJs returned ashore, supporters standing at the water's edge gave them a standing ovation. When they got to London, a thousand fans mobbed them at Liverpool Street train station.

They certainly deserved the accolades. Pirate radio stations transformed the record industry, boosting independent labels from zero in 1964 to twenty percent by 1967. In 1964 four labels – EMI, Philips, Decca and Pye – controlled the entire output of music in Britain. Pirates were a middle-class entrepreneurial force. Major record labels held controlling interests in monolithic industries threatened by such upstarts. Times were changing. The political motives behind these closures seemed obvious to the underground. Though pirate stations were a frivolous commercial enterprise, an unlicensed medium with the ear of thirteen million young people was viewed as a threat in Houses of Parliament.

With the pirates went the impetus behind eclectic and experimental psychedelia. Morbid radio silence resounded through communal flats in Ladbroke Grove, Chelsea and Kensington. The end of pirate radio marked the first death knell for psychedelia's experimentation. With no outlet for non-commercial fare, it was back to turning dials to catch Radio Luxembourg. John Peel's *Perfumed Garden* afforded all manner of marginal and experimental bands a showcase. Peel played seven

unreleased Mothers of Invention songs from *Absolutely Free* in a row on his final night as a pirate DJ. After explaining 'how food gets on a record', Peel closed the era of pirate radio with a bittersweet farewell of the still-unreleased 'We Love You' by the Rolling Stones.

The BBC engineered a rapid co-opting of DJs Peel and Kenny Everett, who they installed on 'wonderful Radio One', launched on September 30. As former pirate DJs flowed into the BBC's ranks, grudging efforts were made to accommodate them.

'Radio London required us to play the Fab Forty, but we could also play Frank Zappa or the Grateful Dead if we felt like it,' recalls DJ Pete Drummond. 'The difference between Radio London and the BBC was complete freedom to play what we liked on the ship with nobody in the studio with us. At the BBC, the engineer sat on the other side of the glass. Each programme was prepared to the minute with one's producer, who also had great input as to music content record-wise, and which live bands would be featured.

'One suit said to me, "I heard your show last night and you only mentioned your name once!" I replied it was unimportant, as music was what was important. This didn't go down well. One producer almost cried when I suggested a Dr John track from his *Gris-Gris* album, saying, "It's too way out!"'

On the surface, Barrett's holiday in Ibiza helped, though Syd had become prone to sudden mood shifts. Hypersensitive to slights, he plunged into silent, brooding spells. As unnerving as his dark moods were periods when he seemed fine, though promo photos taken at Piccadilly Circus reflect Syd's trauma. He glowers with glassy, angry eyes, or spooked wide-eyed shock. He stopped washing his hair, which grew in ragged spiky tufts, augmented with dashes of hair cream. Mirroring the shadows of psychedelia, his demeanour was gothic long before it became a cultural subset. At home, Barrett's behaviour was worrisome. Locked in silent trances, Syd was agreeable one moment, and short and angry with Lindsay and his flatmates the next. Antic disposition was a day and night vocation.

On 1-2 September, Pink Floyd were back at the Roundhouse to play at a special UFO Festival (billed as the 'UFOnic UFOria Festival'), a

benefit for the drug offender's defence organisation, Release. A bill including Crazy World of Arthur Brown, Tomorrow, the Move, and Soft Machine summed up the underground's strengths. The festival seemed like a last hurrah for the underground as a musical collective as much as it marked beginning of the rock show as spectacle. The group played through a proper PA system. According to sound designer Charles Watkins, the band 'was immediately impressed, the only proper PA system capable of taking more than a hundred watts'. The Floyd invested in an eight-hundred-watt system Watkins designed for them. The WEM (Watkins Electric Music) Audiomaster five-channel mixer and half dozen WEM ER hundred-watt transistor amplifiers chained together changed rock PAs.

The underground filed up the steps ringing the Roundhouse, showed their membership cards at the door and paid the entry fee. Inside it was as Spartan as ever, with a bare concrete floor and no seats, old rails tripped up punters and all around stalls sold jewellery, clothes, and Osiris posters. Bands played on a simple raised wooden stage with various light crews flashing bulbous orbs behind. With Hoppy in prison, UFO at the Roundhouse changed under Boyd's guidance.

By his own admission, Boyd presented a well-rounded musical programme, rather than adhering to the broader, less defined underground ethos. With the new UFO focused around music presentation, jugglers, dancers, poets and performers were sidelined, spectators at a show they helped create. Nick Jones wrote: 'UFO had to sink to using less expensive, little-known groups and attendance just slowly dropped off. A few months ago the drinking, fighting crowd started to move in.'

'There were some very good nights at the UFO Roundhouse,' says Joe Boyd. 'The Roundhouse had a good, though different atmosphere than UFO at Tottenham Court Road. The only problems UFO ever had, apart from the police, were at the Roundhouse. Pubs let out at 11:00pm. Irish from Camden Town pubs used to insult or beat up people wearing kaftans. That was the problem of the Roundhouse.'

The Roundhouse lay in a no man's land between two tube stations at Camden Lock, so punters faced a walk to one or the other to get home. Hiring the Hells Angels motorcycle gang to protect freaks worked for a while. Another menace was the latest variant in youth culture, skinheads.

Emerging from the extreme wing of mod, skinheads bore stronger resemblance to the teds of the fifties. Mods split into hippies or skinheads. Skinheads were a logical extension of the outward-looking, elitist mod ethic.

Uniform rigid codes of music and dress became less striking, as the skinhead look was largely defined by the meagre funds that most working-class kids had at their disposal. Those who could not grasp the underground resorted to violent, alcohol-fuelled territorialism. Skinheads were also a working-class reaction to middle-class excesses of freaks – 'peacocks' versus 'peanuts' – peace and love being abstract concepts in the Elephant and Castle or Shepherd's Bush. Freaks emerging from the Roundhouse to Chalk Farm tube station met an unpleasant surprise at the platform's end. Shouted abuse and beatings were common. Women were harassed and had their handbags stolen. Still, they kept returning. Juno Gemes comments, 'The underground took courage as a badge of honour.'

With the proposed third single scrapped, Norman Smith went off on a much-needed holiday. A stern warning to group and producer was issued from on high. Pressure built in the Floyd camp for Barrett to write something 'commercial', a task he either could not, or would not, do. Either shell-shocked or obstinate, Barrett sat on a treasure trove of songs written as far back as the halcyon days of the Mill Pond. 'Thoroughly nasty' was how Andrew King characterized their attitude toward Syd. To writer David Parker, Peter Jenner recalled Syd being placed under 'unremitting pressure' amid a general mood of 'panic, and terrible concern'.

Three days of sessions with Sound Techniques engineer John Wood followed. These were convened in the hope that the group would meet their scheduled single release date of 8 September. Between the fourth and sixth of September, Pink Floyd ploughed through seven takes of the instrumental 'Reaction in G', with takes two and seven deemed as close to finished as they would ever be. None were released. The sessions produced nothing concrete, and the recording of the second album was off to a poor start. In desperation, Jenner and King rallied support by having the others pitch in with ideas to help Barrett out of his slump. Syd's guitar playing still surged ahead, if fitfully. Barrett had good

instinct for finding new technology on offer. Barrett was one of the first British guitarists to use a wah pedal, along with Hendrix and Steve Howe of fellow travellers Tomorrow. Barrett went shopping for effects boxes at Selmer's as soon as Jenner and King sprung some bread on him. The Vox wah pedal came out in 1966. Zappa used it on *Freak Out* and Johnny Echols of Love introduced Jimi Hendrix to it. The pedal altered signal tone to create a distinct sound, somewhat like a crying infant. Barrett used his Selmer wah pedal to sweep the peak response of a filter in frequency to create new sounds. The seesawing tones became his favourite device over the next months.

The group flew to Scandinavia for a five-day tour, arriving in Copenhagen on 9 September. Working with a skeleton crew, Andrew King and Wynne-Willson joined the four Floyds in loading and unloading gear. The group had good advance press and a thousand punters crowded into a hall in Århus with another thousand turned away at the door.

The Floyd often fared better abroad than in Britain, with audiences primed from media coverage of psychedelic London welcoming the group as heroic innovators. (Edgar Froese commented, 'When Tangerine Dream was playing clubs in the late sixties in Germany we used to love *Piper at the Gates of Dawn* and we played "Interstellar Overdrive" just about every night. The early Floyd stuff was so strange and so different from everything at the time.') When their microphones went dead after the first song, they launched into an all-instrumental set. The group played 'Set the Controls' with Syd and Roger switching guitars. Teen magazine *Børge* wrote of a 'boiling ocean' of lights turning the group into 'burning ghosts'. The Danes were enraptured. After the show, Barrett remarked, 'How the audience screamed! Doesn't anyone clap their hands in this country?'

The next morning, Pink Floyd took the ferry to Sweden and drove six hundred kilometres to Stockholm. Once there, Waters, in cantankerous form, was interviewed by Swedish radio. 'Could you please try, at least in words, to express the kind of music that you're performing?' asked the hopeful interviewer. Waters: 'No.'

On the ferry ride over, Waters and Barrett were snapped sharing a joke over a bottle of Carlsberg. The next frame: distracted, Syd gazes across the water, locked in thought. From his expression, something outside Pink Floyd and the travails of fame was bothering him. Talking to Swedish newspaper *Aftonbladet*, Syd lamented, 'No one will like what we play – it's just our lightshow that is mind-blowing.'

The group visited an exhibition of video art by Swedish artist Ture Sjolander, with an eye to collaborating with him on a television production. Though the project never came to fruition, their interest in cutting-edge arts and multi-media built.

That evening, they played the Gyllene Cirkeln ('Golden Circle'). The venue had hosted jazz artists such as John Coltrane, and it seemed unsuited for Pink Floyd. A photo shows them playing along a wall with Swedish fans sat a few feet away at tables pushed together. The group launched into 'Reaction in G'. The ever-present white sheet was lashed to banisters, globules of oil paint from the lightshow dribbled down.

'Matilda Mother' followed. Despite the food placed between them, no one in the audience seemed hungry. A gaunt Barrett, with frightful hair standing on end, played staring at his feet, unleashing wah pedal mayhem at frightful volume. The group blasted through twelve minutes of 'Pow R Toc H' with Mason pounding drums in pagan fury.

Just two hundred and seventy-five people attended the Circle gig, though Pink Floyd made off like bandits, pocketing 7,000 kroner (£400) and splitting back to Copenhagen like Viking marauders in reverse. Writer and Floyd expert Chris Moise comments, 'An excellent quality recording was made in Stockholm and Syd's performance is said to be inspired. To date this recording remains in private hands and has not circulated. The Stockholm tape would be a perfect release on an official group sanctioned "bootleg" – another Syd holy grail.'

The group sat six abreast in a Transit van for the long drive back to Copenhagen, and the return ferry. Barrett watched the gorgeous unspoiled Swedish countryside through a grimy window, leaves changing colour in the autumn light. An enterprising DJ recorded their final gig at the Star Club on 13 September.

Though audio quality is lacking, as one of two known recorded gigs, it affords a rare glimpse into Syd's live Floyd. The half-hour set was

comprised of ‘Reaction in G’, ‘Arnold Layne’, ‘One in a Million’, ‘Matilda Mother’, ‘Scream Thy Last Scream’, and ‘Astronomy Dominé’. Barrett made merry with his wah pedal, unleashing piercing guitar, his voice buried beneath. The one-riff dirge ‘One in a Million’, never recorded in the studio, bears the imprimatur of Roger Waters’s songs reading like lists.

‘One listens to the Copenhagen recording and Syd, at least on that evening, is still leading Pink Floyd,’ observes Moise. ‘Syd is improvising and taking long inspired solos on nearly every song. Many collectors rate Syd’s playing at this show as [the] high water mark of his guitar-playing career. The way Syd dances and darts all around the riff on Waters’s “One in a Million” deserves special mention. Mason mentioned Syd had “short, focused periods” in the second half of ’67. Copenhagen is one of these.’

Restless, hungry and bored from so much time spent in the van, Pink Floyd were invited by reporters from youth paper *Børge* to tour Copenhagen’s famed Tivoli Gardens. At the amusement park gates, a bellicose Danish woman greeted them with by shouting, ‘Get out! We don’t want to see you longhaired idiots!’ They shrugged, the staffers from *Børge* paid, and filed into the park. The Bubble Fountain with strange glass workings beckoned and they darted across manicured lawns. An elderly park officer gave chase and gesticulated wildly, yelling ‘Get out of the garden! What do you think this is – *kindergarten*?’ The bemused group skulked off to sample the slides, the balloon-swing, radio-controlled cars and target-shooting range. Barrett, with his perennial taste for the absurd, brightened. They aimed rifles that shot steel needles at plates on a shelf as an autumn breeze rippled the canvas tent.

Afterward, they tucked in for a horribly expensive filet of fish in *champignon* sauce at the Chinese Tower restaurant. For a post-dinner treat, they wandered to the Blue Wagon horror ride. Though four blue wagons went in, only three came out. On a lark, Rick and Andrew had jumped out to look at the papier-mâché skeletons rising from their coffins. The ride operator and ticket-taker disappeared inside. The ride operator hit Rick Wright so hard in the stomach that he fell over. Andrew King got a punch in the face, and complained his teeth ached for days afterward. Wright and King emerged, dazed and confused, irate Danes at

their heels. They protested, ‘We have no idea what happened. These people yelled at us in a language we couldn’t understand. Then grabbed us and threw us out.’

To thank their hosts, the Floyd threw pink candyfloss at the angry operator and ticket man, who swore in Danish. Laughing through gritted teeth, they exclaimed, ‘Let’s give the operators our candy floss! Perhaps the lovely colour will make them happy!’ The group were glad to leave Tivoli, griping, ‘Are all Danish so square? Don’t they understand we were happy? Why were they yelling and beating us up? Must one absolutely speak Danish to avoid getting beat up?’ Returning to the Star Club for a well-deserved drink, the disc jockey blasted selections from *The Piper at the Gates of Dawn* over the sound system. ‘Ah, at last something we can understand!’

From Denmark, they flew to Ireland, the schedule as unrelenting as ever. On 22 September, a double header saw the Floyd play Tiles before an appearance at the Roundhouse for UFO. Frank Zappa came to see them that night, though his opinion is unknown. Boyd decided to close UFO soon after. ‘I was really surprised that UFO finished,’ admitted Syd. ‘Joe Boyd did all the work on it and I was really amazed when he left.’

Though Middle Earth in Covent Garden bloomed in the wake of UFO’s closure, the divisions between audience and performer returned. Audiences became passive; participatory spirit eclipsed by spectacle. Middle Earth sprang from compromised beginnings as the Electric Garden, which freaks disdained because the club was guided by profit rather than communal ethics. Dave Howson renamed the club and adjusted the atmosphere to fit the displaced UFO audience.

Soon, the spacious Middle Earth became a prime venue, though the group *gestalt* of UFO seemed diluted outside its close quarters. Punters exited the station at Covent Garden and wound through the fruit and vegetable market to the club, where Jenny Fabian ran the ticket booth.

One punter recalled, ‘We filed in through a doorway painted matte black and illuminated by ultraviolet strip lights. Three stages with white-painted walls. Coloured blobs and bubbles creeping up them from projectors in a tower. John Peel saying, “Ah, there’s Inspector Bloggs over the back there trying very hard not to look like a plain clothes policeman.”’

Inside the yawning room were three stages, where the Nice, Tyrannosaurus Rex and Soft Machine played in tandem. Middle Earth ran straight through to morning, with *Citizen Kane* screened as freaks slept until the tube started running again.

The Covent Garden Arts Lab flourished, providing the template for hundreds of such facilities that would shortly spring up around Britain. Many an evening began or ended in the basement watching soft-core art films accompanied by an enticing aroma of stockinged feet. When all else failed, freaks crashed in a squat at 144 Piccadilly, a derelict urban castle frequented by hippies, Hells Angels and greasers where a certain Dr John (Phil Cohen) held court amid the nascent stirrings of the soon-to-be radicalised squatter movement. Happening 44 closed and Jack Bracelin returned to the wilds of Watford with nudist Wiccans in tow. Better Books at Charing Cross closed in October, the Indica Gallery followed on 3 November. The bookstore limped along for another few years.

Syd experienced an upswing in mood and outlook, however brief. On 25 September, Pink Floyd arrived for a radio session at BBC's Playhouse Theatre for broadcast on *Top Gear*. Photographer Chris Walter snapped photos of them outside, perched atop a dune buggy. Photographed for *Fabulous* magazine eating cake to celebrate Syd and Nick's upcoming birthdays, they share a laugh and Barrett grins as they eat and sip champagne. In brief phases, the clouds over Syd parted. Flickers of his radiant charisma re-emerged, that once familiar impish smile. Walter shot Pink Floyd listening to playbacks. Barrett stood with a stern expression, arms resolutely folded. His moods changed by the minute.

Top Gear was BBC Radio One's concession to pirate radio's freeform, non-scripted ways, with John Peel as DJ. Barrett, in excellent form, put paid to the notion he was beyond help. An intimate reading with the air of a chamber performance, the magic Barrett imbued his best work with was in clear evidence here.

They began in acoustic mode, familiar and comfortable to Syd. On 'The Gnome' Mason's wooden blocks, Wright's muted, drawn-out chords, and Syd's whispered vocals impart a captivating air, though with more plaintive gravitas and less whimsy. The others hoot a beleaguered 'hooray!' as Syd whispers tremulously.

The cantering horses' hooves in 'The Scarecrow' were improvised at a slower tempo. Syd enunciates his words with care, in waltz time, discarding the song's acoustic coda. On 'Matilda Mother', Barrett picks up and his and treble tone Telecaster predominates. A calm 'Flaming' ensues with organ pushed to the fore, as DJ John Peel remarks on the 'very strange ethereal sounds of the Pink Floyd'.

'Reaction in G' survives as a thirty-five-second improvisational snippet with Peel and Pete Drummond bantering over an instrumental recalling Soft Machine's jazz-rock. With restrained Bo Diddley-like chord blocks on the Telecaster, 'Reaction in G' bears little resemblance to the proto-thrash live recording from Copenhagen, suggesting that melodies stirred beneath the barrage.

'Set the Controls for the Heart of the Sun' is the prize, with Barrett's guitar itching under Waters's pulsing bass lines and Wright freaking out on the Farfisa. Comparison with the *A Saucerful of Secrets* version suggests Barrett's guitar was mixed out.

Here, Syd sounds in good humour, relaxed and in control, if frail and shaky. His performance on this subtle session does much to belie the view he was out of his head day and night. Though the master tapes were erased, a release is overdue. Such is the brilliance of the performance. A high-quality tape was kept for decades by Bernard Andrews, producer and engineer on the session.

With a strong streak of passive-aggressive behaviour on Syd's part, his moods were important to his well-being. Confident and self-assertive when feeling upbeat, he was retiring and irritable when depressed. Sensitive, Barrett angered at slights, perceived or real, making him a poor match for Waters's abrasive manner. Unable to show anger, Syd held grudges in silence or became obstinate. Duggie Fields opined in *Psychedelic Renegades*: 'I am sure Syd and Roger had a lot of conflict, although quietly because Syd was so internal.'

Conflict built as their opposite natures brought Barrett and Waters into contention. They had been in Pink Floyd for three years, with opposing views on the band's best direction. The need for control, always a factor in Waters's professional relations, was a cause for disagreement. Further, an essential difference in philosophy. Syd's intuitive and immediate

knowledge versus Waters's inferential and mediate logic. Barrett's alienation continued apace, as he absented himself by degrees. His studio dominion, once unchallenged, shattered as his control slipped and Waters stepped to the fore.

'Set the Controls for the Heart of the Sun' replaced 'Interstellar Overdrive' as the live centrepiece, symbolising the eclipse of Barrett's leading role, and Waters's ascendancy. Pretty Thing Phil May speculated to author Richie Unterberger that Waters was keen to consolidate control. 'Waters was such an egoist. The minute he could get rid of anybody who was doing anything in the Floyd, he would. Roger wanted the Floyd for himself.'

'The defensive barriers apparent in a small group of people who work together are almost heavier than everyday contact with the general public,' observed Waters. 'In a small group, you feel more susceptible.'

Peter Jenner said, 'Things got to be nasty in the studio. Syd in one corner and the rest of Pink Floyd in the other. There had always been conflict between Roger and Syd but that made the group.'

When Barrett did pipe up, he was tactless in pointing out his bandmates' faults, attacking their lack of cool, naff clothes, and lack of interest in AMM-inspired abstractions. John Marsh observed, 'The Floyd were rock'n'rollers. The only guy in any way attached to the greater counterculture, Syd Barrett, was swiftly removed, or removed himself. Personality conflict between Roger and Syd was apparent from the early days.'

'When I was with the Floyd, the form of the music played onstage was mainly governed by the records,' said Barrett, bemoaning either dwindling improvisational freedom or having to play singles. Syd's roundabout way of addressing strife in Pink Floyd was: 'With the volume used, they inclined to push me a little. Yes, there were hang-ups when I was with them, although it was not due to the travelling or anything which you just put in the category of being a regular activity in that kind of job.'

Unresolved tensions in Pink Floyd rose to the surface in performance. 'Hang-ups' meant personality problems, power struggles or general differences in goals. June Child noted that meeting obligations became insurmountable for Syd. He was often tracked down, collected, and taken

to various commitments. None of which aided Barrett's fracturing self. 'Syd didn't talk to anyone,' said Peter Jenner. 'By now going onstage and playing one chord throughout the set. Into total anarchistic experiment and never considered other members of the group.'

Part of Syd's antic disposition was wilful – a 'fuck you' to bandmates, managers, producer, and record label for the pressures that they put upon him. Tempers flared. Barrett was, by instinct, experimental in the extreme. With bandmates who were determined to go the distance and become rock stars, either Syd gave in or vice versa. No one was willing to give ground. Barrett was torn between loyalty to his bandmates and his hard held views on not selling out. Eccentric, moody, self-centred – relations with the others became strained. They began to doubt Barrett's experimental instincts. To the rest of the group Barrett seemed to be steering toward scuttling their boat.

One person's madness is another's art. Not all saw Syd standing at stage front playing nothing with chemically seared eyes as symptomatic of insanity, but rather a high wire form of performance art. Twink from Tomorrow argued to Nick Salomon of *Terrascope*: 'I had seen Syd perform onstage and do nothing. I'd also seen Yoko Ono do some of her stuff onstage and for me what Syd did was pure art. I loved it when the Floyd were standing there and Syd was at the front of the stage with guitar strapped around his neck just looking at the audience for an hour. I thought that was wonderful.'

Drugs hastened the destruction of Syd's lead role. Strong dosages tore apart his day-to-day life to the extent that discerning between fantasy and reality often proved difficult. 'The people least able to cope with acid were those with the strongest imaginations,' observed Pete Brown. 'For people who had no imaginations, acid provided them with the illusion they had one. For people who were already out there, it pushed them too far out.'

'Although I would go out on acid, once I almost freaked out in the cinema, I had taken so much something or other,' recalls Jenny Fabian. 'We went to see Walt Disney's *Fantasia*. I almost passed out when I saw how the music combined with the cartoons! When I took the big doses, I couldn't move for the first hour. You were pole-axed! It must have shattered the central nervous system. It would shatter your body. You felt

your mind going into this great electronic buzz. I wondered if I followed the buzz where I would go. I never made it, I used to go so far and then pull back.

'Presumably, Syd followed the buzz all the way. No one has ever managed to find what he saw. He'd gone beyond the safety zone, if there is one. Syd had to the ultimate. He followed the noise out the room, the one we always pulled back from. One looks for great revelations when maybe there aren't any.'

Syd, hungry to touch eternity, sped toward the celestial buzz. Sant Mat held that meditation took one back along a celestial Sound Current toward God. In *Surat Shabda Yoga*, or yoga of the inner sound, meditators spoke of a tingling buzz around the head, a soundless sound like bees buzzing, or a waterfall. Gurus taught that this inner sound was like the ocean inside a conch shell. During meditation, adepts insisted that they experienced scintillations, flashes, electric-like sparks, and thunderous rumbles.

As many in the sixties found, Syd perhaps among them, reaching for the secret too soon, particularly on acid trips, could have dire consequences. Peter Jenner explained; 'The acid brought out his latent madness. I'm sure latent madness gave him creativity. Acid brought out the creativity. More important, acid brought out madness. Creativity was there.'

Those at Blackhill Enterprises felt that Syd was being fed acid at Cromwell Road. Peter Jenner was adamant. 'We rescued him from Cromwell Road, run by heavy, loony messianic acid freaks. There was a feeling Syd ought to be taking lots of acid and they should help him. Cromwell was the catastrophic flat where Syd got "acid-ed" out. Acid in the coffee every morning, that's what we were told. He had one of our cats and they gave the cat acid.'

Road manager John Marsh told writer Jonathon Green: 'Syd was one of the earliest acid casualties. He lived at 101 Cromwell Road with various characters, among whom was a psychotic character called "Scotty". One of the original acid-in-the-reservoir, change-the-face-of-the-world acid missionaries. Also a desperately twisted freak and malevolently crazy.

‘Everyone knew if you went round to see Syd, never have a cup of tea, never take a glass of water unless you got it from the tap and even then be desperately worried. Scotty’s thing was spiking all and everything. By this time, Syd was living on a diet that must have been comprised of eighty percent acid. The group, Jenner and King, me, we all knew what was happening but nobody had the courage or wished to be thought uncool enough to dig Syd out of this situation.

‘Syd was going farther down the tubes because nobody had the guts… Syd went farther down the mine from inertia of those around him. That to me put the kibosh on acid culture, one desperate load of crap.’

The reality at 101 Cromwell Road was less extreme. The notoriety of the dwelling, seen from the outside, tended to make outsiders exaggerate. Duggie Fields says, ‘I never knew of anyone getting spiked with regularity. I did know people who did get spiked, though I never did. Some acid around then was very strong.’

Spiking is a myth that the residents deny. Duggie Fields, Jock Findlay, Sue Kingsford and Jenny Spires all refute the notion Barrett was spiked. More cynically, whoever spiked Syd would forever deny it. The fact remains: LSD users built tolerance quickly, and so daily doses had negligible impact. That is, unless the dose was doubled each time, as diehards soon discovered. Worse than being spiked with acid, Syd was spiked with a belief that LSD was essential to new understanding. Mick Rock noted in *Uncut*: ‘I had an easier relationship with Syd because I was an outsider – the people who freaked him out were ones he had grown up with in Cambridge.’

Jenny Lesmoir-Gordon recalls Cromwell Road unravelling from the inside. ‘Nigel was on probation. We’d all be completely out of our minds and someone would say, “There’s a little man in a suit at the door.” Nigel’s probation officer was nice and charming, and did not know what was going on. There was a sense of danger, that we were being irresponsible. Yet it was great fun. I felt what we were doing was dangerous. I felt we were playing with fire. I felt a lot of fear while also having a great time. We were all confused. For me, I could not have gone on with that. Many people were losing it. Syd was not the first to fall. Several people had difficulties. John Esam was full of fear. He had

already been busted in Paris and had been in prison, and was bitter about that. Very paranoid.'

Nigel Lesmoir-Gordon adds, 'Johnny Johnson from Cambridge tried to kill himself by throwing himself from a six-storey window. He lived. You can imagine what he did to himself. He spent a year in hospital. When he came out, he used to come and visit, take off his clothes and run around the flat with this horribly misshapen body. Missing on one occasion, I went to the bathroom window and there, clinging to drainpipes was Johnny, stark naked. It was raining too. I managed to talk him back in. He had gone mad. Schizophrenic. He heard voices and was very paranoid.'

Johnson succeeded in committing suicide soon after. 'Odd and colourful behaviour was taken as harmless eccentricity,' recalls Nigel. 'The same with Syd. We did not notice Syd was slipping over the edge until he was gone. We did not recognise it for what it was. Not that we would have necessarily known how to respond had we appreciated the reality of the situation.'

Fear struck into the heart of the Cromwell Road community. The building was short on time. A demolition order was due for the imminent construction of a new hotel. The street-level studio already had wooden boards hammered over the windows facing the street. Life upstairs took a dire turn, each resident living on borrowed time. Syd and Lindsay lived with all of this, feeling that the ground under their feet was shifting.

'The most dramatic disintegration at Cromwell Road was [*name omitted*], one of the first people I knew who really freaked out,' explains Fields. 'He took a lot of acid, not more than anyone else did. I remember him getting to a stage where you couldn't have a conversation with him because he would quote a book he had read. He wouldn't say he was quoting from a book, he would be parroting whatever he'd read. Everything that came from his mind was something he'd read in a book.'

As the first chill of cold autumn set in, paranoia swept through the underground, with freaks wondering aloud if the stars were not conspiring against them. An obsession with astrology, geomancy and black magic compounded the unpleasant vibrations, with people casting lots on peculiar fancies. Richard Cavendish's *The Black Arts* began to crop up on hippy bedspreads, in suffocating candlelit rooms thick with

incense. Throughout, drugs swirled in a haze, the ‘vibe’ darkening by degrees.

‘Syd was influenced by people around him, who encouraged him to take trips,’ asserted Wright. ‘There are loads of acid casualties out there. He wasn’t alone. LSD destroyed Syd and it destroyed other people.’

A friend of Syd’s comments, ‘The others in the band, ironically, didn’t take acid at all or smoke joints. Desperately casting around for people to blame. I’m afraid Rick didn’t know what he was talking about here. This became the “official” line. Syd liked to see familiar faces.’

At twenty-one years old, Syd lived without any stable framework in his life, save the pop stardom that grated his nerves to shreds. He spent every day travelling, performing or recording. His home life was transitory, chaos made calm reflection impossible. Shutting the door on strangers in his kitchen talking about far-fetched dreams and illusive schemes could not drown out their noise. Since he moved to London at eighteen, he lived in six different flats in three years. With little pattern in his life save a feeling of being on the run with nowhere to turn, Syd stated that a key pleasure was sitting on the floor drinking tea, he considered himself fortunate to do so.

About acid, he observed: ‘There’s really nothing to say.’ He skirted around the issue of whether he took too much. ‘Well, I don’t know, it doesn’t seem to have much to do with the job.’ For Barrett, ‘the job’ was Pink Floyd, and his words demonstrate what the role had come to mean.

Rosemary Breen told Simon Webb: ‘He was just playing music with his friends and it took off. He didn’t really understand fame and didn’t enjoy it, he just wanted to have fun and it wasn’t fun touring and being asked to play when he didn’t feel like it. Syd would have been much happier simply playing in a pub. Celebrity he found impossible to understand, and uncomfortable.’

Nigel and Jenny Lesmoir-Gordon returned from Lebanon and crashed with Stash de Rola at his father’s chalet in Switzerland before his father, the famous painter Balthus, ran them all out. Jenny says, ‘Marianne Faithfull and Mick Jagger would be in and out, also Chris Case and John Tate. That lasted two weeks. When we came back, we had no room. George Andrews, the poet, moved in with his schizophrenic wife and five

children. The children used to roll joints for him, bizarre. The flat, when we were away, became an extraordinary place of drugs. We moved upstairs. Lindsay and Syd were up there, and Sue Kingsford and Jenny Spires too.'

There is photo of Syd and Jenny Spires, which pictures the couple looking into each other's eyes with tenderness, though Syd seems to be looking at her from a slight remove. Spires says, 'This photo was taken in the kitchen at Cromwell Road, an "acoustic" band rehearsal. Rick, Nick and Rog Waters all lived with girlfriends by now and I expect they found the kitchen at Cromwell Road a mess! I remember washing up and I wasn't even living there at this time. Rog Waters and I did it, or he helped in some way. Pete Wynne-Willson had brought some lights round to try out some idea or other and Syd and I got caught in the backlight. Just a shared moment. We had been joking around before this. I remember the evening very clearly. Everyone was relaxed that evening. Not too long after this, Syd and Lindsay moved to Richmond. I never visited them there. This was after Ally Pally. Syd could, at times, be very distanced and acting strangely. Not all the time.'

Everyone at Cromwell Road was starting to feel frail after a summer of excess. Like a psychedelic doss house, with so many people the flat teetered on chaos. Children rolling joints for their father was bound to surprise even the most jaded hipster.

'After this sojourn upstairs, with nowhere to go, we ended in Alberto Polyblanc's back room,' explains Nigel. They moved in, temporarily on the middle floor where Polyblanc, a City gent, lived. 'Then Storm and Dave Gale got Egerton Court and that is when we gave our room to Syd and Lindsay. Storm, David Henderson, and Aubrey "Po" Powell, me and Jenny and David Gale were at Egerton Court. All of us from Cambridge back together. At Cromwell there weren't many of those people.'

The Cambridge set had an inbuilt attractor: 'That tendency to meet again in London.' With things so hectic in London, the comfort of old faces was welcoming. With the new school term, Storm, Ponji, Aubrey 'Po' Powell and David Gale secured a lease on a flat at Egerton Court, a tall Victorian bulwark of a building right across from South Kensington tube station. Gale and Thorgerson studied at the Royal College of Art. Po Powell and Nigel at the London School of Film Technique.

With the wrecker's ball looming, Jenner and King got Syd and Lindsay out of Cromwell Road. Barrett, Lindsay, Rick, and Juliette Wright all moved into a spacious four-bedroom flat in quasi-suburban Richmond Hill owned by Andrew King's father.

Photos of Syd and Lindsay show a somewhat cosy domesticity, with a butterfly-printed shawl tacked to walls, central heating, newspapers and teacups on their table in the sitting room. Syd seems a shadow of himself, perched like a lark on a branch, ready to fly off at faintest startle. Mick Rock, Sue Kingsford and Jock Findlay came by, and crashed on the sofa when trains stopped running. On days off, Syd and Lindsay hit the outdoor market along Richmond Common, or fed ducks in the afternoon by the lapping tidewaters of the Thames. The rising and falling moods in 'Apples and Oranges' reflect their time at Richmond well. The nearby Royal Botanical Gardens at Kew were a favourite for Syd and Lindsay to stroll through. Peaceful walks with friends in the Terrace Gardens sloping up from the River Thames, or the gravel trail along the top of Richmond Hill were a welcome and much needed panacea for a troubled man.

11. VEGETABLE MAN

‘Fly o’re the backside of the World farr off
Into a Limbo large and broad, since calld
The Paradise of Fools, to few unknown
Long after, now unpeopl’d, and untrod;
All this dark Globe the Fiend found as he pass’d,
And long he wanderd…’

Paradise Lost
John Milton, 1677

‘The thought of the dark globe seemed to grow stronger as all grew quiet. Pippin felt again the weight in his hands and saw again the mysterious red depths into which he looked for a moment. He tossed, turned, and tried to think of something else. At last, he could stand it no longer. He got up and looked round.’

The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers
J.R.R. Tolkien, 1954

One aspect of psychedelics is that they amplify the sense of inner and outer reality. LSD works to amplify feelings or thoughts, often illuminating, at times trivial, and sometimes horrifying. LSD’s presumed chemical action lies in disrupting the chemical serotonin, which regulates moods. It also tampers with another neurotransmitter, glutamate. An amino acid, glutamate is the principal excitatory neurotransmitter. Recent research indicates that as LSD binds to serotonin receptors, glutamate and serotonin combine to generate hallucinations. Researchers theorise that the LSD molecule passes for serotonin in the brain via the pineal gland. The key difference being that LSD carries a higher electrical charge, creating an electrical storm at a cellular level.

LSD affects a shutdown of serotonin, which lasts around ten minutes. As LSD floods the brain, a rapid influx of information results, lasting from four to twelve hours depending on dosage. The intense visual hallucinations triggered by LSD are likened to short circuits in the visual centres, creating distortions that the brain misinterprets. A feedback loop results, resulting in hallucinations. Much like the Binson can feed back on an input signal, so too does LSD with optical input. LSD influences the same serotonin receptors that are imbalanced in schizophrenics. Both drug and disease result in delusions and hallucinations. Recent research has proven that the binding of LSD to glutamate regulating receptors causes hallucinogenic effects. Neuronal damage is caused by overstimulation of glutamate, which poisons brain cells through over-synthesis of the calming neurotransmitter GABA.

Given the right frame of mind, company and calm surroundings (Leary's 'set and setting'), LSD trips have been shown to be illuminating and profound. Conceivably, the acid experience could be valuable in controlled settings, though widespread misuse precludes serious investigation into any possible benefits. Useful in psychotherapy, LSD has a degree of efficacy in treating migraines, childhood autism and alcoholism.

LSD has parallels with the fable of Pandora's Box, wherein the god Epimetheus told Pandora not to open a box that contained all knowledge, good and evil. She opened the box and good and evil duly poured out. All that remained in the box was hope. Once open, Syd, like Pandora, could never close the box. That said, Barrett's LSD consumption was much lower than many thought. Friend Jock Findlay insisted that Syd took no more than ten trips in 1967. One friend observes, 'People assumed Syd was taking acid every day, but just smoking dope was enough to start that trippy feeling again. Acid trips had a way of coming back on you.' Sixties countercultural lore held that the sixth LSD trip prompted an unravelling in susceptible minds. Those who think they control drug intake are susceptible to being controlled by drugs. There comes a point when LSD, like all drugs, turns on you.

Rather than being a panacea to end all ills, LSD held no answers, as some assumed. The quality of LSD experiences was subjective. In a poll, LSD users all saw visuals, all but four saw trails and moving colour

patterns behind closed eyes, half saw walls and furniture breathing, half saw faces, weird creatures, and bodies in panelling or carpeting. Most experienced unity with all life; a few felt they reached a threshold. Fewer broached the threshold but retained little or no memory of what they found there.

Some minds were better equipped to handle bad trips. This was less to do with intelligence then blind genetic luck. For a creative mind in its formative stages of development, and in absence of substantial foundation, Barrett's drug abuse imperilled rather than empowered him. A leave-taking of the senses, he realised too late. Songs like 'Jugband Blues' and later 'Late Night' suggest an awareness that his situation was worsening. Syd achieved a consciousness of maturity as his identity began to split. Illusory acid trips did little to bolster a mind in fragmentation.

Like the life of a rare orchid that cannot survive outside a hothouse, Syd's creative explosion was short and intense. A conscious awareness and separation of creation from creator may mark the dividing line between creativity and madness. When the creator becomes an element of the created work and cannot separate fantasy from reality, cracks appear. In a sense, the persona of Syd Barrett, pop star and underground icon, subsumed its creator, Roger Barrett.

David Bowie observed that his character, Ziggy Stardust, took on life of its own. 'I became Ziggy Stardust. David Bowie went out the window. I got hopelessly lost in the fantasy. I did have doubts about my sanity. I put myself dangerously near the line. One creates a *doppelgänger* and then imbues that with all your faults, guilt, and fears. Then you destroy him, destroying all your guilt, fear and paranoia. I found it easier to function through him, although I probably put myself on a path of pure psychological damage. I was blurring lines between sanity and an insane figure, and finally did break lines down. I couldn't perceive the difference between the stage persona and myself.'

Reflecting upon Syd's psychological state, Nick Mason observed to John Edginton: 'We probably rather exacerbated the problem rather than helped. Having said that, a number of people did try to do their best for him. There were attempts to try to get him to therapy. Someone described

Syd's symptoms [to R.D. Laing]. He did say, "Are you sure this is Syd's problem?" which maybe was a good thing to say.'

When psychologist R.D. Laing, author of *The Divided Self*, was played an interview of Barrett, he is said to have pronounced him incurable. For a radical psychotherapist, such a prognosis seems especially unlikely. Laing was a leading advocate of psychosis, indeed schizophrenia, as a process one could emerge from back to sanity. David Gale says, 'Laing contended schizophrenia should be encouraged to unravel in its fullness, and was a healing process. If you did the right thing to the right kind of people, had enough time and sympathy, you could take a person through the process and back again.'

Fifteen years later Laing gave *Actuel* magazine his view on what happened to Syd. 'You feel programmed, conditioned, automated. Then you take some acid and all of a sudden, discover Shiva's dance. But nothing can help the visionary express his vision. People buy what he produces and think of him as merchandise. He thinks he can find love and understanding. Then songs seem to be getting emptier all the time. Everything becomes nothingness.' Of Laing, Waters said, 'We got Syd to the door a couple of times but never got him through the door.'

Although identified by some as the villain in the Syd Barrett tragedy, Waters took a proactive approach and sought help for Barrett. Waters rang Syd's brother in Cambridge and explained the severity of Syd's situation. 'I telephoned one of his brothers, telling him he had to come and get Syd, because he was in a terrible mess, and needed help.' His brother came to London, talked with Syd and Waters at length, and announced that Syd would be fine. Barrett could affect a convincing impression of sanity when circumstances demanded.

Syd returned for a brief visit home, but his family found great difficulty in reaching him. Rosemary, at first delighted by her brother's success, was appalled at the change that had come over him. 'I couldn't reach him, the brother I knew had disappeared. After that meeting, I just couldn't enjoy the music anymore. It was accepted, in his world, to be involved in drugs. Therefore he withdrew much more from Cambridge and from the family because he knew we didn't understand.'

Peter Jenner also found that the once sparkling and effusive young man who sat with him at Earlham Road listening to Love and Eric

Dolphy had become difficult to reach. When Jenner caught Syd's often-averted eyes, he was startled at how hollow and piercing they were. Beyond the sartorial excesses of psychedelia, Barrett began affecting exaggerated makeup and clothing that verged on drag. From kohl-rimmed eyes and pancake stage makeup, he progressed to wearing lipstick. Bandmates were baffled when they came to fetch him for a gig and he got in the Bentley wearing Lindsay's frock, announcing 'I'm a homosexual' in a flat voice. Syd pretended to be gay for several days after.

Peter Jenner explained, 'We tried to stop him going crazy. I put all my textbook sociology, all the stuff I'd read about psychology in action. We took him to R.D. Laing. Laing didn't say much. We tried to take what he said literally, we tried to use the inner meaning of what he was saying. We tried to change objective situations. We moved him out of Cromwell Road but it was too late.'

Duggie Fields told Kris DiLorenzo: 'Pressures on Syd must have upset him very much, the pressure where it takes off very fast, which Pink Floyd did – certainly the way people behaved toward them. I used to be speechless at the number of people who would invade our flat. How they behaved toward anyone in the group – especially girls. I'd never seen anything like it. Some girls were stunning. They would literally throw themselves at Syd. A very physically attractive person – Syd had problems with that.'

'Syd was absolutely out there in Space City, trying to deal with demands of becoming a very hot, successful new band,' recalled Jenner. 'An enormous pressure for interviews and people recognising him in the street and people would come up to him, out of their skull, and say, "Syd, what's it all about? What does it all mean?" He was just overwhelmed by it.'

On 1 October, the Pink Floyd performed at the grand Saville Theatre in London. The group were photographed backstage, with a smiling Syd engaged in animated discussion with his bandmates, though his arms were folded one over the other, gripping his shoulders in a protective stance. The next photo finds him staring into the camera startled and anxious, a foreshadowing of the sad photos taken in Cambridge decades

later. Further frames show the group clustered around a piano, Syd sits staring into the lens with utter remove, eyes glazed, and shoulders slumped. Stoned, he looks unhappy. ‘I didn’t go backstage. I actually thought Syd played better than at Ally Pally,’ recalls Jenny Spires.

NME filed a perfunctory review. ‘Hippies rave over Pink Floyd… The beautiful people and hippies turned up in their shawls, embroidered jackets, Indian headbands and beads, to see the Pink Floyd at the Saville on Sunday night. Even the compere, Joe Boyd, was from UFO. The Pink Floyd were one of the first groups to experiment with weird light effects and they now have it down to a fine art, or rather, their lighting man has. The flashing patterns and weaving silhouettes are an integral part of their music, very loud and mainly instrumental.’

Melody Maker’s Nick Jones wrote more tellingly: ‘The Pink Floyd, lights flicking nervously around their feet, open with an eerie, full of promise first number. Unfortunately the impact of their opening was never continued. The Floyd themselves were never revealed, their personalities cut dead in the dark. We saw that too familiar, too impersonal performance. Certainly, the Floyd have much to say. Their music is shatteringly original, taking off into a totally unexplored musical dimension of spacious, free electronic ideas and movements. Their running order lacked fire or direction, nothing really seemed to get or go anywhere. The Floyd didn’t round off what could have been such exciting musical corners. There’s a wealth of promises in the Floyd and their music. Only time will tell if they will come back.’

Energised by playing in a small theatre, a cautious enthusiasm emerged in the group’s circle. Such ambitions were in marked contrast to the crisis at hand. The worse Syd got, the more grandiose Pink Floyd’s plans became. On October 7, Blackhill issued a press release. ‘The Pink Floyd are to star in four concert spectaculars to be staged in major halls. They are developing a completely new style show, incorporating small orchestra and choir of a hundred voices. Next week the Floyd record their new single, another Syd Barrett composition.’

A reporter from pop magazine *Go* dropped into a recording session to interview Barrett, padding around the studio barefoot, standing on the balls of his feet. Syd, explaining his motivation once again, said, ‘It’s better not to have a set goal. You’d be very narrow-minded if you did. All

I know is that I'm beginning to think less now. It's getting better.' The perplexed reporter said, 'Well, if you stop thinking entirely, you might as well be a vegetable.' 'Yeah!' was Barrett's startling comeback. Amused by the encounter, Syd incorporated the notion into the song that best chronicles his fragmentation, 'Vegetable Man'.

Pink Floyd visited the Radiophonic Workshop inside BBC's Maida Vale studios on 9 October. They poked around at circuits and valves and examined crude electronic oscillators. They found the workshop's Delia Derbyshire working on a White Noise track, 'The Black Mass: An Electric Storm in Hell'.

Discussions were fruitful, though no collaboration resulted. Derbyshire took them to the workshop's Delta Plus studio, where colleague Peter Zinovieff introduced the band to the EMS VCS-3 analogue synthesiser, later put to excellent use on *The Dark Side of the Moon*. In David Parker's *Random Precision*, Derbyshire said, 'I realised they'd done serious listening to whatever electronic music was available on record. They mentioned 1966 composition *Praxis for 12* by Jani Christou.' Wright had most likely heard of Christou in Greece in July 1966, when the latter's '11 Strings, Piano and Percussion' piece was performed in Athens. Waters insisted to Mark Paytress that he was never into Stockhausen or the avant-garde. 'I thought it was absolute nonsense.'

With Pink Floyd's American tour looming, pressure grew for the increasingly elusive third single. Syd faced intense demands to write a hit to carry them through their forthcoming American dates, and a subsequent planned psychedelic package tour of Britain with Hendrix. Unable to book time at EMI Studios, from the ninth to the eleventh of October they held intensive sessions at London's De Lane Lea Studios with Norman Smith. Peter Bown fell ill, and Ken Scott replaced him as engineer for the rest of the year. De Lane Lea had a small recording room, smaller than Studio Three, which tended toward a more 'dry' approach, rather than using ambient room sound. The sound desk was the same as Sound Techniques, hand-built by John Wood and Geoff Frost.

If thinking less meant getting better, then Barrett adopted the satirical stance of Frank Zappa to ridicule the position he found himself caught in.

Borrowing a page from the acidic satire of the Fugs and Mothers of Invention, Syd let loose with an impromptu rant conjured on the spot.

'It was stressful waiting for Syd to come up with songs for the second album,' said Peter Jenner. 'Everybody was looking at him and he couldn't do it. Syd was around at my house just before he had to go to record. Because a song was needed, he wrote a description of what he was wearing and threw in a chorus that went, "Vegetable man, where are you?"'

Syd freely adapted rhythm and chords from the Fugs' 'Kill for Peace' and finished the song in minutes. Jenner said, 'I saw him writing "Vegetable Man" in our sitting room… A description of himself, where he was, and what he was doing. "Jugband Blues" is earlier, more poetic.'

'Vegetable Man' was either a brilliant piss-take on the absurdity of Syd's situation as a pop-smith, or else an admission of psychosis. Jenner added, 'Though some of Syd's finest work, I wouldn't wish anyone to go through what he went through to get to those songs.'

In *The Golden Bough*, James Frazer recounted that European peasants once made 'vegetable men' before harvest time, representing the spirit of vegetation, ceremonially paraded around, wreathed in garlands, then destroyed. He wrote: 'The tree-spirit or spirit of vegetation is represented in vegetable and human form simultaneously, with puppet or living person set side by side as if for the express purpose of explaining each other.'

In a scathing indictment of the superfluous fripperies of King's Road fashion, Barrett rips through glad rags and exposes shoddy seams beneath gaudy colours: the stink of blue velvet trousers, or the artificiality of yellow nylon socks. Not celebrating King's Road clothiers, or its attendant snobbery, this was a subversion of the Kinks' 'Dedicated Follower of Fashion'. Beyond criticising the scene at large, Barrett took himself to task for being a fake. Under the cover of throwaway humour, Barrett expounded his lacerating imagery. Psychedelic pop was a con, he implied, his own pop-star persona more so. Creeping cynicism had overshadowed his holistic worldview. The blight was on.

'Vegetable Man' was a list of fractured rhyming couplets, written made-to-order from necessity, rather than by creative spark. Barrett tells us more about his inner life than we might wish to hear by describing

what he is wearing. Taking the scarecrow metaphor a step past the pale, Barrett states what he had become with antic bitterness.

Inspired by the Mothers of Invention, Zappa's 'Plastic People' resonates through 'Vegetable Man'. Released in Britain in October, the Mothers' album *Absolutely Free* occupied Barrett's turntable. Zappa called the LP 'underground oratorios'. Zappa expert Lewis Saul writes: 'The stop and start rubatos, dramatic ironic recitatives, dandy choruses – all consistent with the classical oratorio form.'

The lyrics see Barrett listing his King's Road gear item by item. His comedic timing combines with the withering lyrics as he rants. Despite his antic, first-person point of view, there is a decided detachment as Barrett describes himself as a 'Vegetable Man'. Beyond the Scarecrow, the Vegetable Man is a hideous harlequin figure.

Gazing deep into his watch, the meter takes a mordant lurch. Barrett's compounded perspective is wound so tight that the abrupt tempo shifts cease to be stylistic devices. Words spin of their own accord, as rhymes schemes clang with concision. Jenner remarked that hearing 'Vegetable Man' was the first concrete sign that Syd's sanity hung in the balance.

Decades later in John Edginton's documentary, Waters could only shake his head at Syd's sarcastic declaration of himself as a Vegetable Man. The group chime like vaudeville minstrel men in exaggerated trilling pantomime, mimicking the tagline of American television show *Car 54, Where Are You?*. In the middle-eight bars, the song's martial rhythm dissolves into mocking laughter, and Syd breaks into lulling reverie.

There is visceral poignancy in a sad lyric juxtaposed with upbeat, Byrds-derived jangling guitar phrases. Self-mocking and ironic, Syd's lyrics are more cutting set to the jaunty music that sabotages his message. These words ring with transparent conviction as he alludes to absenting oneself altogether – a blunt statement of existential alienation. Rosemary affirmed, 'He always looked for a person who could understand him. I don't think he ever met him or her – never. When you have such a complicated personality you don't get many opportunities to meet another person as complex.'

The first take ends with Pink Floyd bursting into fifteen seconds of nervous laughter. Another take of 'Vegetable Man', more of a jam, at

faster tempo is a furious rocker, with wild distorted riffs from Syd and jagged stop-start riffing. ‘Vegetable Man’’s laughter is close to hysteria, and remains locked in EMI’s vaults.

Following on the heels of Syd’s Zappa-inspired rant was Rick Wright’s first recorded effort, ‘Remember a Day’. Though he later dismissed the song, the lyrics’ hazy recollections of childhood were well in line with Barrett’s bittersweet nostalgia. Childhood’s end, as we have seen, was a strong theme in psychedelia. The difference is that Rick was standing on the other side of the dividing line from childhood, looking back, his personality integrated into adulthood.

Rising to the occasion, Syd’s minimalist atmospheric Telecaster *glissandi*, slightly overdriven, shadows Wright’s melody. Barrett’s own memory was hazy. ‘I did play on another track written by Richard Wright. I forget the title but it had a steel guitar in the background.’ Barrett embellishes on Wright’s right-hand fills with restraint and grace, the ascending and descending *glissandi* as elliptical as a pendulum knocked off base. Waters’s bass throbs high in the mix, with Norman Smith taking over for Mason on drums. Barrett’s guitar in these sessions blends fraying concision and piercing clarity.

Barrett’s slide guitar in ‘Remember a Day’ ascended and descended around a floating key centre, utilising Wright’s left-hand bass patterns as his cue. By darkening edges with *glissandi*, Syd kept the listener’s attention focused toward the tonal centre of Wright’s song. The beauteous interplay between Wright’s modal piano and Syd’s slides serve as a potent reminder of their near-telepathic musical empathy.

Syd’s final contribution to Pink Floyd was a fractured music-hall meditation, with excursions into dissonance and a brass band to boot. Jug bands plied their trade along Beale Street in Memphis. Ma Rainey, ‘mother of the blues’ and a cited Syd favourite, headed one such group, with Tampa Red. However, there is no jug in ‘Jugband Blues’, the title culled from 1924 ‘Jug Band Blues’ by Sara Martin’s Jug Band.

‘A wonderfully tragic piece, poignant,’ observed Mason. ‘There the lyrics stop being abstract.’ Whether viewed as a potent salvo directed at the intransigence of the producer, or his growing discontent with his bandmates, ‘Jugband Blues’ shows Syd taking a long, cold look at his own situation. The song seems an inspired fanfare from a time when all

was lost, akin to the group playing ‘Nearer, My God, to Thee’ on the deck of the sinking *Titanic*. Rife with ironic humour, a bounty of ideas were compressed into ‘Jugband Blues’. The discordant lyrics matched an eclectic sweep of tempo, acoustic and electric guitars, wandering flutes, Salvation Army group sounds, delirious Binson effects, an ebullient chorus and chiming middle-eight bars.

Like ‘Bike’, the time signature was in wild flux, from 3/4 into 2/4 and then 4/4. Packed with overdubs, Barrett sprinted in a race to finish the song before he lost control. Sessions were filled with frenzied energy. In ‘Jugband Blues’ Barrett jettisoned conventional songwriting structure, although the apparent chaos is deceptive. Despite its episodic construction, its relative cohesion belies the chaos. Mirroring the abrupt mood shifts of its composer, ‘Jugband Blues’ marks both an end and a beginning.

The accompanying promo film is a study in alienation. Barrett, uncomfortable under the hot studio lights, his face painted with garish stage makeup, mimes in a robotic deadpan, as though reciting an eye chart. He sings of impending exile, literal and metaphorical, with a stone face. With withering sarcasm, wrapped in the hauteur of formal address, Barrett delivers a lyric which expresses gratitude for his loss, borrowed in part from André Breton’s 1928 book *Surrealism and Painting*, where the painter Giorgio de Chirico berates his critics: ‘I shall be *most obliged to you* if you will be good enough to *make it clear* that the poetic interpretation of paintings of mine… is arbitrary and improper.’

Syd addressed the *Top of the Pops* fiasco with spite directed toward whoever, his last line was spat out with venom, each word hammering home the staccato chords. In an abrupt shift to a waltz time singsong that parodied his bucolic pastorals, Syd sings a creepy taunt with Bm and F#m seesawing beneath the lyric. The unusual chord progression bears traces of folk ballads, going from open chords to barré chords and back. Even the song’s chords illustrate how distanced Barrett had become. The underlying F#m chords project a sense of departure.

Whether a reminder who the songsmith in Pink Floyd was, or a statement of psychic detachment, Barrett crowns himself king, and then abdicates. David Gilmour felt ‘Jugband Blues’ was the first in a new phase of Syd’s songwriting, ‘Lyrically, his solo stuff is stronger than the

Piper material. He had moved on. You can clearly hear the transition on "Jugband Blues". That's brilliant. So desperately personal.'

Melody Maker observed: '"Jugband Blues" is almost a poetic recitation by Barrett, with avant-garde sound effects by Pink Floyd. The centre passage is almost freeform pop, with six members of the Salvation Army on the recording session told to "play what you like".' As a last touch, Smith said to Syd, 'I hear an orchestration overdub, a brass band effect.' Syd confirmed, 'Yeah, yeah, a Salvation Army band.' Brass bands evoked memories of the old bandstand on Christ's Piece in Cambridge, where on Sundays a Salvation Army brass band played. Another inspiration was the dizzy New Orleans-style horn on Bob Dylan's 'Rainy Day Women #12 & 35'.

Smith booked moonlighting members of the Salvation Army's International Staff Band on short notice, acquiring a room at De Lane Lea Studio for an evening session. He avoided writing any notation for the Sally Army Band at Syd's request. The band, good Christian brass players all, showed up and set up. After an hour, Syd strolled in. Smith introduced him to the band, and asked him what he wanted them to play. Barrett requested the brass band improvise over the repeated '*la-la-la*' that punctuated the measure like a metronome, acting as informal arrangement for the brass band to play over. Smith was speechless, and insistent the band have a firmer guideline. Exasperated, Barrett turned on his heel and left the studio. Smith wrote chord symbols for the eight bars, and told the band, 'When you get to these parts, play any notes you like within these chords symbols. See how it comes out.'

Telling a brass band to improvise is like asking politicians to write their own speeches, a cause for instant panic. The International Staff Band rose to the challenge and improvised, ignoring Smith's chart altogether. Barrett was allowed his last fanfare by default, though he was long gone.

After a final burst of '*la-la-la*' panning across the sound spectrum, long echoing repeats, jagged *glissando* from D to Fdim, atonal guitar scratching and reverberating clangs, a brief flashing organ rounds out the mix. The sonic fanfare ends on a rough tape splice. His underlying concept comes through as Barrett re-emerges with a fragile coda. A lone acoustic guitar *cadenza* rises from the wreckage. Playing a rudimentary

two-chord passage strummed like a sea chantey, a fragile-sounding Syd asks a pointed question with no answer. The last unresolved strummed A chord hangs suspended in the air and ‘Jugband Blues’ is over. Resigned to his fate, his dream became a joke.

In a restless farewell as he emerged from the other end of the looking glass, the promo film shows Syd pausing to stare at the viewer, before pointedly turning away. Barrett jettisoned his *Piper* persona, stripping psychedelia to voice and acoustic guitar. Returning to a hazy afternoon by the riverbank in Cambridge, the coda was a decisive rejection of psychedelia that prefigured the dark globe of his solo work. Barrett’s painful self-awareness made a strong impression on his managers. ‘A sad song, the portrait of a nervous breakdown,’ thought Peter Jenner. Andrew King said, ‘Syd knew exactly what was happening to him. Powerless to stop it, he knew he was going wrong inside.’

Jenner and King cancelled a string of Pink Floyd’s American gigs as they struggled to get work visas. The group entered De Lane Lea on 20 October, to record what proved to be the last glittering shards of Syd Barrett’s tenure with the group. They ploughed through ten unwieldy minutes of an instrumental, ‘Intremental’ – an apt title considering Barrett was creating an audio snapshot of his inner unravelling.

Intended as set music for artist John Latham’s 1962 film *Speak*, Latham had asked Pink Floyd to provide a soundtrack and explained that he wanted music that took account of the strong, rhythmic pulse of the film. Displeased with what they came up with, Latham added his own soundtrack; a contact mike on a circular saw shredding through books. As Syd unravelled, ‘Intremental’, amazingly, did not fit Latham’s criteria for auto-destructive art.

The final expulsion of Syd’s psychedelia was ‘(Down in the) Beechwoods’. Long the province of rumour and myth, the song remained unheard until a tape culled from a 1969 interview with Nick Mason surfaced on the unofficial *Have You Got It Yet* compilation. ‘Beechwoods’ is a backing track left unfinished, inconclusive and beguiling in raw form. Barrett alternates between chaos and concision, with sparkling effects and clangourous guitars. A standout barrelhouse piano and pealing Farfisa by Rick Wright wrap around Syd’s staccato rhythm chords.

Written soon after ‘See Emily Play’, by Nick Mason’s account, ‘Beechwoods’ was the final song of any substance recorded with Barrett. The title was perhaps culled from Isak Dinesen’s *Seven Gothic Tales*, or more acutely from the beech woods outside Cambridge. Barrett brought his inspiration back to its source. There were no lyrics, nor vocals, however, ‘Beechwoods’ occupied a realm beyond words.

As Syd tried to find his way back to the beech woods, the music business was in transition. The singles charts were about to be superseded by an album-oriented market. Pink Floyd were the first group signed to EMI with an album deal, a fruit of psychedelia, and rather an ambiguous one. Musicians, producers and engineers were allowed a much freer hand to overdub. One legacy of this extra time and space was the bloated excesses of pomp-rock group Emerson, Lake, and Palmer, and – some argue – Pink Floyd.

Singles were still the barometer of success and marketability. Despite *The Piper at the Gates of Dawn* reaching Number Six in the charts, a successful third single would be key to securing gigs. Record labels demanded them, as promoters did not look beyond a group’s most recent seven-inch. Roger Waters said, ‘When you record a single, you are not interested in showing the public how far you’ve advanced since the last record. You’ve got to please the recording company, apart from any other consideration, otherwise they won’t release it.’

‘We tended to underrate his problem,’ admitted Jenner. ‘I thought I could act as mediator, having been a sociology teacher at the LSE and all that guff. One thing I regret now was I made demands on Syd. He had written “See Emily Play” and suddenly everything had to be seen in commercial terms. We may have pressurised him into paranoia about having to come up with another hit single.’

The solution was ‘Apples and Oranges’, a throwaway tune Barrett wrote after a walk across Barnes Common with Lindsay. This proved his final concession to pop. In four days of sessions at Abbey Road, the group hacked together ‘Apples and Oranges’ and Rick Wright’s ‘Paintbox’. The strain was severe, with a final session clocking in at thirteen gruelling hours.

‘A group decision, we definitely set out “Apples and Oranges” as a single,’ asserted Waters. ‘We all thought it was a really good song but the

recording didn't come up as well. We've never been a singles group, "Arnold Layne", which I thought was a great single, and "See Emily Play", which wasn't a great single, did very well and those are the only two that we'd ever had. "Apples and Oranges" was a very good song. In spite of mistakes and the production, I don't think it was bad. "Apples and Oranges" was destroyed by the production. It's a fucking good song.' Nick Mason added dryly, 'It could have done with more working out.'

'Apples and Oranges' was Barrett's last stand with Pink Floyd. He recorded nothing of substance with them again. Syd rises to the occasion on guitar, soloing through the entire song, with slight overdrive, fuzz and wah pedal. His guitar is played a touch out of tune, whether this stems from perversity or laziness is unknown. He sounds put upon and bored, chiming in with a '*doot-doot-doodle-oo*' in the outro, as if illustrating the melody line to the band. After howling feedback at the songs end, Syd adds a terse, '*I'll explain it all to you sometime, one day*,' which is audible on the stereo remaster.

'We were being hustled about to make hit singles,' explained Mason. 'There are so many people saying it's important you start to think it is important. It is possible on an LP to do exactly what we want. The last single "Apples and Oranges", we had to hustle a bit. It was commercial but we could only do it in two sessions.'

'Apples and Oranges' was a fair imitation of a pop single, written under duress. The chords, phrasing and tempo bear the influence of Cat Stevens' hit single, 'Matthew and Son' – suggesting Syd worked up the track from an older, half-finished idea. The chorus is a dreary singsong that sounds apathetic rather than languorous. Andrew King felt that Wright had a hand in helping Barrett write the somewhat saccharine chorus, which bore a resemblance to the Beatles' 'All You Need is Love' and, more horrifyingly, 'Leaving on a Jet Plane' by Peter, Paul and Mary. Barrett does some interesting toying with cadence and rhyme, foreshadowing similar mayhem on 'Octopus'.

One line echoed the Who's 1966 poperetta 'A Quick One, While He's Away'. Stylistic shifts and tempo switches hinged on Townshend's signature Asus4 chord. An odd wailing note rises after each verse, while Jingling bells recall 'Little Saint Nick' by the Beach Boys. It features an onomato-melodic evocation of a passing ice-cream cart, as an opening

wah pedal figure mimics quacking ducks, while a guitar *arpeggio* recreates the sound of a car's horn. Wright's saturated organ lines added elements of subtlety and beauty that were otherwise absent. Syd's reliance on internal rhyme increases apace into irregular odes. For the first time, Syd sounded as though he was singing to order.

'Paintbox' was a slight save for the coda. Wright's lyrics straddled both the evocative and banal, despite the pleasant vocal and sparkling clear mix. Waters, Wright and Mason each shine, picking up the slack from an uninterested Barrett, who turned in minimal *staccato* acoustic strums. His backwards guitar sounds did not make the final mix. Pop singles should sound effortless rather than laboured. All told, Pink Floyd's third single was lacklustre. Quality control was forsaken, with no time to spare. Beyond the wild wood lay the wide world, America was next.

On 3 November, Pink Floyd left for their first American tour, accompanied by Peter Wynne-Willson and John Marsh. Jenner remained in England to sort out the mess over the new single, reschedule cancelled gigs and make sense of the band's finances. Andrew King was already in California dealing with furious bookers, including Bill Graham, owner of the Winterland and Fillmore Ballrooms, and heaviest hand in the San Francisco promotion scene. They missed eight booked shows in Los Angeles and San Francisco, including a Fillmore benefit gig for pioneering FM radio station KPFA, where DJ Tom Donahue launched remarkable San Franciscan music ranging from the Quicksilver Messenger Service to electronic oddities Lothar and the Hand People.

The group boarded a BOAC flight at Heathrow and buckled in. As the plane taxied to the runway's end, Barrett stubbed his cigarette on the carpet to the flight attendant's evident displeasure. Careless or callous, it was a taste of trouble ahead. 'We went to the States for eight days,' said Roger Waters. 'An amazing disaster, Syd by this time was completely off his head.'

After a layover in Canada while their work permits came through, the quartet arrived in San Francisco at 5:30am on 4 November. A belligerent Bill Graham (with a sheepish Andrew King in tow) greeted them at the airport arrivals gate with swearing and shouting, taking Pink Floyd

aback. The jet-lagged quartet played the three-thousand-capacity Winterland Ballroom that night, with Janis Joplin's Big Brother and the Holding Company and Richie Havens on a triple bill.

With demand high for Joplin, only a small contingent turned out to hear Pink Floyd open. The band's lights and sound were lost in the cavernous converted ice-skating rink. They began 'Astronomy Dominé' in the dark before powerful multicoloured strobe lights began flashing with frantic intensity, compensating with the loudest distortion and feedback possible.

The group found Joplin and Big Brother's blues-rock anticlimactic. Before they left London, *Rave* magazine asserted that Pink Floyd were part of a 'Big Pop Movement: The Psychedelic Bands', which included far-out bubblegum psych bands Peanut Butter Conspiracy and Sopwith Camel.

'Winterland was certainly the biggest place we played there,' recalls Wynne-Willson. 'Pink Floyd and the lighting were very small, whereas Big Brother and the Holding Company were very big, and produced a very big noise. San Francisco lighting crew Headlights were very big with masses of equipment. We had a voltage problem there. They supplied us with a pathetic transformer with an earthing problem. From the lighting point of view, not anything to remember. Winterland was a tremendously interesting situation, though, from Janis Joplin and a whole slew of other stuff. Roger was drinking phenomenal quantities of Southern Comfort produced by Janis Joplin. Janis had a whole mess of stuff around her.'

Joplin introduced the lads to Kentucky Bourbon, though one wonders whether she laced the bottle with codeine, as was her habit. The *San Francisco Chronicle* observed that the Floyd were 'an interesting group, very involved with electronic sounds of all varieties. They do not swing much.'

Jet-lagged, the next morning they flew south to Los Angeles. That day Pink Floyd performed two sets, afternoon and evening, at the Cheetah Club in Venice Beach. The Cheetah was in the old Aragon Ballroom, a teenage dance hall since the 1920s. The club sat at the end of Ocean Park Pier, site of Pacific Ocean Park, or P.O.P., an amusement park perched over the Pacific Ocean. Save for the odd errant albatross circling

overhead, nothing stirred behind its high walls. The seedy promenade, and competition from Disneyland, had ensured the park's closure a month before.

As the band tumbled from their rental van, the vast P.O.P. stood silent in the honey balm of the afternoon, they were confronted by shuttered amusements, including a wooden Sea Serpent roller coaster and an Octopus ride. Fading billboards loomed overhead – a Mahi Mahi ride, and ghost tower with metal turrets and painted steel skin rusting in the salted ocean breeze. The ride was an outsize version of the helter-skelter slide erected at the heart of Cambridge's Midsummer Fair that Syd had sketched in a 1962 letter to Libby. 'To remind you of happy days,' scribbled in the margin.

As flashbacks of Butlins' carousels came flooding, Barrett experienced an epiphany. Thousands of miles from home, he stood at a pier jutting into the Pacific Ocean's perfect blue water. At the edge of the wide world was childhood's end, with no return to innocence and wonder. At the end of P.O.P., Barrett stirred with the first flickers of 'Clowns and Jugglers' (later renamed 'Octopus'). For the next six months, by his account, Barrett carried the image of the abandoned amusement park in his head, woven through with a dozen nursery rhymes and poems to create one of his most enduring songs.

'The Cheetah Club was a terrible stainless steel discotheque,' Wynne-Willson recounts. 'We hadn't seen that kind of club before. I don't know what music they usually played there. It would have suited discotheque music rather than the Floyd's music.' Inside, Barrett wandered in a replica Spanish palace courtyard, complete with chandeliers, mosaic tiles, terracotta ceilings, balconies and arches. The old Aragon Ballroom had been crudely updated into a pop nightclub, with neon-stained boutique, TV room, and movie theatre. A one-stop nightlife experience, the Cheetah was tatty and vulgar, like Tiles on Oxford Street blown up into an American Technicolor cartoon. Psychedelic iridescent paint spots were splashed across floors and the fabric that covered the seats. Under black lights, the room had a dull spotted glow. Lights flanked the stage, including powerful strobe lights. They arrived with almost no equipment, having to borrow and scavenge a set-up before taking the stage.

The house band at the Cheetah were proto-Alice Cooper band Nazz. Cooper said, ‘When they first played Los Angeles, about a dozen people showed up to see them. Their lightshow consisted of lights pointed upward from the edge of the stage, like ours. They also played similar eerie music, bathed in echo. We became fast friends with the group.’

Roadie Neal Smith, who soon replaced John Speer on drums, said, ‘We were house band at the Cheetah Club. We opened for all groups that played there. Sherri booked the place and we stayed at her house. The Floyd came in to the club and played *Piper at the Gates of Dawn* live. It was great. Syd’s guitar strings backstage were actually rusted on his old Fender Telecaster, as if the guitar was left out in a rainstorm. The first song of their set started and Rick Wright was really on. Syd went to the mike, a Shure 58. A big spark. He got shocked for sure. He then put his arms down and stood there the rest of the show. He never touched his guitar or sang. He just looked out into oblivion! He was then helped offstage and we went back to the house. Syd stuck his face off in the corner of the room the whole night. Maybe Glen talked to him. Syd never talked to anyone or me after he got shocked.’

‘During their first song, Syd hits a chord and he gets a shock,’ confirmed Cooper. ‘Then he stops playing. The rest of the set he stands there and stares, for an hour and a half. Never played another note, stood there and stared. Pink Floyd played. I mentioned this to Roger Waters and he said, “That was the night we knew Syd was in a lot of trouble mentally.”’

‘At the Cheetah, Syd was in a state. I can remember Syd being onstage but not playing a note,’ says Peter Wynne-Willson. ‘I’m not sure if they didn’t get in someone to play guitar for some gigs.’ Wynne-Willson recalls that night as the first time Barrett played nothing. Waters, in fury, smashed a borrowed bass guitar to bits to the delight of the crowd.

Days or weeks after serious electrical shock, disorders can develop, resembling several syndromes, such as cerebellar disorders, spinal muscular atrophy, or sensorimotor peripheral neuropathy. Electrons flowing through the body can produce injury, even death, by depolarising muscles and nerves, causing abnormal electrical rhythms in the heart and brain, or internal electrical burns by producing holes in cell membranes.

Members of the Yardbirds, Shadows and Stone the Crows all died from electrical shock. Keith Richards of the Rolling Stones was nearly killed at a 1965 show in California, with only his rubberised soles saving his life.

After the gig, Alice Cooper and the Nazz invited Pink Floyd and their crew for dinner at Cheetah booker Sherri Cottle's house, communal digs on nearby Beethoven Street. A broke, tired and dispirited Pink Floyd readily agreed. Cooper said, 'The Floyd came into town, ran out of money – like everyone else does in Los Angeles – and ended up staying in our house.'

Two bands, plus Cottle and her two children, shared the three-bedroom house on Beethoven Street that night. Drummer John Speer recalled, 'These guys were so far beyond anything we had heard. We were totally blown away. Then they came to our house and we felt honoured they partied with us. A great inspiration.' Lead guitarist Michael Bruce said, 'They were all happy to be over here. We loved *Piper*. I listen back to it, so psychedelic I cannot believe it. "Interstellar Overdrive" is so crystal clear and clean, light years ahead of American recordings. It's amazing we won the war.'

Cooper's rhythm guitarist Glen Buxton had vivid memories of Syd. Barrett was silent, smiling quizzically, as they sat for dinner. Buxton sat next to the reticent musician with staring eyes, wild hair and a blank gaze. Midway through, Buxton passed Barrett the bowl of sugar, though Barrett had not asked him for it. As Buxton handed the bowl over, Barrett acknowledged it with a slight smile. Buxton was struck by Barrett's strange presence, detached yet in tune. John Speer agreed, 'I remember him at times staring at the wall and not saying anything to anybody. Many minutes would go by and nobody could talk to him. In his own little world.' Buxton told Kris DiLorenzo: 'Syd would get really spaced and he'd stand there gazing. His eyes were *incredible* – they'd go right through you.' Bruce said, 'Syd would look at you with this glassy look, "the Largactyl shuffle". Very sweet, polite and charming. Very nice, he did not talk a lot.'

Next morning, Alice Cooper went to the kitchen. Syd sat silently, in pink crushed velvet trousers, staring at some cornflakes in utter absorption. Cooper said, 'Syd was seeing something I wasn't seeing. I

don’t know what he was on. He could have sat there all day, happy as anyone else. Syd was so out there. He’d be watching that box of cornflakes the way I would watch television. We’d all sit around whispering, “How can anybody get that high?” Syd was also very bipolar. We didn’t find out until later he was half-high, halfinsane, a very bad combination.’

Nazz had an audition at Gazzari’s on the Sunset Strip that day. Cooper recounts that Pink Floyd decided to play a prank. They made American dessert treats, chocolate brownies, with marijuana blended into the mix. ‘They came to Gazzari’s to hear us play,’ recalled Bruce. ‘So funny because Alice, he did not do [drugs], and he did something in brownie form. All of a sudden he passed out, fell off the stage like Jim Morrison, right in front of them. All four were sitting right in front. We were obscure then, doing *Pretties For You* stuff. They loved it.’

Buxton commiserated with Wynne-Willson, who complained Barrett was either absentminded or careless. ‘They’d fly a thousand miles, get to the gig, he’d get onstage and wouldn’t have a guitar. “Where’s your guitar, Syd?” He wouldn’t talk. He would leave all his money in his clothes in the hotel room, or on the plane. Sometimes, they would have to fly back and pick up his guitar. I did not pick up that he was a drug casualty, although there were many people that would do those exact things because they were drugged out. Syd was definitely from Mars.’

That morning, they headed to a disastrous meeting with their Tower Records A&R man at Capitol Records’ skyscraper offices. Later, Pink Floyd were taken to see tourist sites. ‘The Floyd were taken by some A&R man around Hollywood,’ said John Marsh. ‘The classic tour of stars’ homes ended on the corner of Hollywood and Vine. The group are looking around, “Hey made it, Hollywood!” The A&R man is saying, “Yes, here we are, the centre of it all, Hollywood and Vine.” Syd is wandering around the place, wide-eyed, reckless and legged. “Gee,” he says, “it’s great to be in Las Vegas!”’ If Barrett was joking, no one in the entourage could tell.

Next, the Floyd were whisked to NBC Television Studios to appear on *Pat Boone in Hollywood*. Boone was a fifties crooner who scored big hits with watered-down versions of Little Richard’s raucous rockers such as ‘Tutti Frutti’. *Pat Boone in Hollywood* was a straight scene indeed,

broadcast to a white, middle-class audience. The group could not have been more out of place. Still, Pat Boone recalled to *Late Night*'s Jon Allan, 'The group were totally cooperative, including Syd, and created a big impression on our studio audiences, which eased apprehension growing about anti-social attitudes of British rock bands. Though I can't remember a conversation with Syd, at least I remember their appearance was well received and they were thorough gentlemen.'

A disoriented Syd did not make things easy. Roger Waters said, 'We would do the run through and Syd would stand there with his Esquire with silver bits all over and mime happily. Then they'd go, "Okay guys, we're gonna do it now, roll the tape, playback, and go!" He'd stand there and not move a muscle. He knew perfectly well what was going on, he was being crazy. They did four or five takes like that. Eventually I mimed it.' When Boone came onstage to talk to Pink Floyd afterward, he turned with toothsome grin to ask Syd what he liked best. Syd stared at Boone while the others cringed. After a long pause, Syd said, 'America.'

America, which for the English seems larger than life at the best of times, might have seemed like a carnival for Barrett, the greatest fairground ride of all. Syd appeared to be enjoying himself, despite the consternation of his bandmates.

At the dreadful Royal Hawaiian Motel on La Brea Boulevard, Syd gave groupies in bikinis a giggle by jumping into the pool fully clothed. Discarding his soaked velvet and satin outfit at the poolside, he scurried to his squalid room. Waters later found Syd sitting by the window, fast asleep, a cigarette burnt-out between his fingers.

The group wondered whether Syd was sabotaging the tour on purpose. Too young, ambitious and clueless to realise Barrett needed help, rather than to front a tour of America. Those in his circle were not aware of the implications of Barrett losing his grip. The group ignored him over morning hamburgers and Cokes at a nearby diner. Andrew King recalled to *Uncut*: 'Nobody was talking to Syd. I had to chaperone him everywhere to prevent anything too dreadful happening to him.'

The next day, 7 November, on Dick Clark's *American Bandstand* television show, Pink Floyd managed to better the previous day's performance. Still suffering the after-effects of severe electrical shock, playing a white Fender Telecaster, Barrett made a game effort to mime to

the still unreleased ‘Apples and Oranges’, before stopping altogether. He looked exhausted, staring with an unnerving expression, like a puppet sprung from a Punch and Judy show.

With his penetrating stare, as though sending out some silent plea, Barrett gazed into the camera lens. Whether intentional or not, this still gaze was a powerful statement on the shallow spectacle, and high cost, of pop stardom. Roger Waters mimed along, looking decidedly nonplussed, scowling into the camera while Mason and Wright shrugged and tried not to laugh. After the song, Dick Clark, the mannequin-like host, stepped up to interview them. Barrett answered Clark’s questions, though with perfunctory shortness bordering on aggression:

> Clark: ‘Apples and Oranges’, their latest release. Gentlemen, pardon me, let me sneak in here, and sit tight. (Clark thrusts a microphone into Syd’s face) How long do you plan to stay with us?
>
> Barrett: Oh, we’re here for ten days, about.
>
> Clark: Will you have an opportunity to see, er… (Unnerved by Syd’s appearance, Clark edges past to talk to Rick) Let me jump over here for a second… other parts of the United States other than the West Coast?
>
> Wright: We’re going on to San Francisco. Then we’re going to New York.
>
> Clark: You can stop in at Haight-Ashbury and see what happens there, kind of an unusual spot. Syd, did you write this?
>
> Barrett: Yeah.
>
> Clark: I notice on the album, you wrote most of the songs. Is that true?
>
> Barrett: Yeah, that’s right.

Perhaps it was more surprising that Clark did not ask, ‘Which one’s Pink?’ ‘We had little or no time to talk,’ Clark explained. ‘The only conversation was a brief interview on television. The interview had very little content, because there was no opportunity to talk before airtime. I don’t recall Syd Barrett failing to lip-synch vocals on “Apples and Oranges”. He did appear very lethargic.’

The next morning, King shepherded his charges to their next TV appearance, on *Boss City* hosted by Sam Riddle. Larry Tamblyn of the Standells said of their Tower Records label-mates, ‘We did meet Pink Floyd once in 1967. They appeared on a *Boss City* segment taping right before ours.’

Andrew King stated that Barrett refused to take part, walking out the studio muttering, ‘I’m not doing that again,’ leaving Wright to mime ‘Matilda Mother’. King, watching the spectacle in horror from the wings, was confronted by the irate producer, who demanded, ‘Whaddya mean the lead singer has left?’ Everything that could have gone wrong, did go wrong. What could have been a triumph turned into a debacle.

‘You can’t believe someone is deliberately trying to screw it up,’ confided Mason. ‘Yet the other half of you is saying, “This man’s crazy, he’s trying to destroy me!” Destroy *me*, it gets personal. You all get worked up into extreme rage. Shall I roar with laughter or shall I try to kill him? I don’t remember being overcome with compassion.’

In shock, though undaunted, Pink Floyd flew back to San Francisco for a triple bill with Procol Harum and Chicago band H.P. Lovecraft. They arrived at the Balloon Club at 5:30pm for a meet-and-greet organised by Tower Records. Unfortunately, the Tower representative had alerted no one, so Pink Floyd sat staring into their drinks while strippers prepared for their evening show.

Jerry McGeorge, guitarist with Chicago garage-rock group the Shadows of Knight, joined H.P. Lovecraft on bass in summer 1967. McGeorge says, ‘Bill Graham’s shows were at the old Fillmore Auditorium on Thursday night, then at the Winterland, a large arena nearby, on Friday and Saturday. H.P. Lovecraft opened, followed by Pink Floyd, with Procol Harum headlining. Procol Harum was particularly good. I became a Robin Trower fan as a result. Trower dazzled us during rehearsal breaks, or any other moment he could jam with a bass player

and drummer, doing Jimi Hendrix, Clapton and his own licks, playing Gibson SG through a Marshall amp. The first time I'd ever heard a top-tier, blues-based British guitarist ripping through a Marshall. It still gives me goose bumps thinking about it!

'Based on those performances no one could have ever predicted the future success of Pink Floyd. Syd was, well, being Syd. Their music was at best abstract and arcane. Crowd response was less than overwhelming. Billed as "the latest sensation from England", while pushing some kit across the Winterland during set-up, Procol Harum's roadie loudly proclaimed, "Attention, America! Pink Floyd *is not* a sensation in England!" We did find them, Roger Waters in particular, friendly. I enjoyed talking with them about Britain. H.P. Lovecraft and Pink Floyd were miles apart musically. They improvised everything they did, impressive when you think back on it. Syd did fiddle about with tuning. Syd seemed to do about anything he could conjure up to his guitar, short of setting it alight or disassembling it. He produced some remarkable sounds given equipment limitations. Syd was far ahead of his time.'

Charlie Messing, of the Holy Modal Rounders, told Paul Kerr: 'Syd tuned Roger's bass; he reached over and tweaked the pegs while Roger hit the strings one by one. That was unusual… They played the songs on the first album, of course, and they all started with the songs as recorded, and branched out into ten-minute jams, then back to the song for the end, like "Interstellar Overdrive" is on the album. Each song was like that. Nice long set. Biggest set of drums I'd ever seen, and I'd seen the Who! Syd played a Telecaster, and he played *great* in his unique style – described by one critic as "as if he'd never held a guitar before but was divinely inspired" and all. He was fine – even great – for this show.'

McGeorge adds, 'I cannot attest to the artists' sobriety. The shows were unlike any we'd experienced before our San Francisco dates. The Joshua Light shows, and all others, were elaborate. For the time, professionally done. Musicians found strobe lights distracting, never in synch with the beat.'

Michael Goldberg, editor of the *mog.com* music website, was at the 11 November Winterland gig. '*The Piper at the Gates of Dawn* was released in England in August. Right away, it was being played on KMPX, San Francisco's new freeform underground rock station. I flipped out when I

heard “Interstellar Overdrive”. So trippy and took the whole psychedelic rock deal to a whole other level. Still a really underground thing in America. Procol Harum had the big hit so people were slowly arriving with anticipation to see the headliner, not Pink Floyd.

‘I was surprised, after the huge spacey sound of the album, that it was just the four guys on stage. They looked like a regular rock group. I expected something more grandiose – being a teenager, taking everything rock’n’roll literally, and thinking of rock stars as gods. When I heard that “Clapton is God” deal, I took it literally. I was fourteen! I was in awe, seeing Pink Floyd. To me, Syd with long shaggy hair and English good looks, up there singing and playing guitar, he looked great. Syd was playing his mirrored Fender Esquire. I was surprised because based on Pink Floyd’s sound on record, I imagined him playing a Gretsch or Rickenbacker like the Beatles. I was blown away by their set. The one I was interested in, the singer, songwriter and frontman.

‘Whether objectively good or not, I’d have to hear a recording. That night, standing there, watching them play songs off the first album, each one a masterpiece as far as I was concerned, actually seeing these British rock stars in person, was amazing. Many times, members of a group experience a performance differently than fans. They hear bum notes, are in a bad mood, and might be pissed because Syd was spacing or smoking too much. They play night after night, so are hypercritical. For a fan like me, seeing them for the first time, loving their album, so anticipating seeing them, a killer performance. I even got autographs from them afterwards, including one from Syd. Yeah, a trip.’

Like a clown slapped every evening in his act, the balance swung against Syd. The sheer force he channelled into making each performance transcendent plagued him. The audience, in a sense, fed off his breakdown.

In Stanley Kubrick’s *Full Metal Jacket*, marines discuss the thousand-yard stare: ‘a grunt gets it when he’s been in the shit too long’ and ‘it’s like you’re really seeing beyond’. Vietnam marine Bob Neener said, ‘The thousand-yard stare is a look through the obvious, a stare beyond or through to the other side of reality.’

‘Syd hanging with his arms limp,’ says Wynne-Willson, ‘or banging one chord did happen quite a bit. It happened definitely later on the tour

with Hendrix. In the States was the first time Syd literally did not play anything. Drugs we were doing were quite considerable – DMT, STP, and others. I don't know about acid. I was never aware of a shortage of hash or marijuana at Earlham, Egerton or Cromwell. We had not encountered the prodigious Californian drugs scene. From interest in Pink Floyd we came under pressure, drugs pressure, and not remotely unpleasant. The Californian scene was so different from the English scene [that] Syd found it disorienting. I did too. I found it wonderful really. People taking drugs had cars. In England, only one person in Cromwell, Egerton or Earlham who had a car. The sun shone, archetypal Californian girls would scoop you up and take you somewhere. Quite a remarkable scene. Just before the California scene started to fall apart and become gruesome, with Haight-Ashbury teetering on the brink of whatever it fell into.'

'I went to San Francisco and stayed right on Haight-Ashbury around that time,' says Duggie Fields. 'One of the freakiest places I'd ever been to. You had to watch your back as you walked along the street, with people hustling to sell each other drugs the minute you stepped out your front door. "Smack! Acid! Speed!" in the most aggressive manner, people stopping your way as you walked down the street. I was shocked at that.'

'Haight-Ashbury was an urban slum, populated by drug-addled and peddling white kids rather than ethnic minorities,' says McGeorge. 'I found it fascinating to visit. Being personally still deep in the mod era, I stood out as an odd duck. Cleanliness and hygiene were not high priorities in the Haight. Musically, with some notable exceptions, most San Francisco bands struck me as not much more than garage group wankers. The great Mike Bloomfield was critical of Bay Area musicianship, particularly compared to our Chicago contemporary homeboys. Cannot say I disagreed, then or now. British bands were so much better than San Francisco counterparts it was astounding. H.P. Lovecraft later performed on a Fillmore billing with Traffic. Steve Winwood's performances are among my fondest memories.'

Barrett and Wynne-Willson wandered through Haight-Ashbury, and hung out with sundry new friends at Ghirardelli Square, a popular hippy spot. Barrett had his hair done in a permanent at Vidal Sassoon's salon in London before he left, which did not come off well. Wynne-Willson

recalls Syd looking ill at ease and tense with a terrible botched perm and unwashed clothes highlighting his problems rather than drawing attention away from them. His green boots were held together with elastic bands, while not indicative of insanity, this symbolised rough and ready carelessness. (Waters sang of these boots on 'Nobody Home' on *The Wall*)

The groupies who frequented Winterland did not mind. Barrett, as ever, was a recipient of their ministrations. Syd and Peter, being the two stoners in the Pink Floyd crew, were receptive to overtures from two Californian hippy women who offered to get them high. They went to a house in the hills outside San Francisco where they smoked themselves senseless on powerful West Coast weed. When they performed that night, Peter was just about able to operate the lighting equipment. Syd was so high he neither played his instrument nor sang.

Barrett's fragile psyche was further bombarded with drugs such as DMT and STP. DMT, or dimethyltryptamine, is one of the simplest of all chemical compounds – three molecules that the brain has receptors for inside the pineal gland. Developed as an incapacitating agent for the US Army, scientists theorise that DMT is released during near-death experiences. When smoked in crystalline form, DMT produces a ten- to fifteen-minute trip where users feel transported into time-space vortexes as laughing elf-like creatures spiral by at lightning speed. DMT was already on the menu at Cromwell Road by 1966, when John Esam was busted.

Psychedelic researcher Terence McKenna offered this insight in *Tryptamine Hallucinogens and Consciousness*: 'Once smoked, the onset begins in about fifteen seconds. One falls immediately into an internal trance. An ascending tone is heard. At that point, one arrives underground. There is this immense weight above you, a large vaulted dome. The room is going around. In that space, one feels like a child, as though one has come out somewhere in eternity. In this place are entities, which I call "self-transforming machine elves", engaged in linguistic activity that we do not have words for, visible language. When you break into the space, they cheer! You know the Pink Floyd song ["The Gnome"]. This has to be what these guys were talking about. You break into this space. The gnomes say hooray! They come rushing forward.'

After LSD was declared illegal, the flood of analogues began to produce bad effects. DOM (known on the street as STP) was altogether problematic. George McGeorge says, ‘I wasn’t much into the drug scene back then, however, it simply couldn’t be avoided. Rumours of some super-drug called STP were rampant. No one I knew ever did any. During his last days with the Byrds, David Crosby sported a large “STP” decal on his Gretsch guitar. STP was an automotive oil additive, some thick goo in a can.’

Chemist Alexander Shulgin, who first synthesised DOM, described his experience on a 10-microgram dose: ‘I felt I knew what it was like to look across the brink to insanity. DOM has the glory and the doom sealed up in it. All that’s needed to unseal it is to surround it with a warm living human for a few hours. All the dark things are made clear.’ A slow onset, an eighteen-hour rush and a thirty-six-hour peak and re-entry made STP a heady high. Extreme synaesthesia made STP unpopular, earning the drug the street name ‘orange dome overdose tabs’.

When Pete Townshend of the Who tried STP (with Keith Moon, on an aeroplane across the Atlantic, no less) he found the experience so horrific, he had an out-of-body experience and swore off psychedelic drugs altogether. Peter Tork of the Monkees brought STP to London on 3 July and gave Clapton and John Lennon doses at the Speakeasy. Eric Clapton wrote in his autobiography that he needed a week after his STP trip before he felt normal. He feared that the hieroglyphics in his peripheral vision would never end.

Mick Farren of the Deviants recounted to Jonathon Green how their organist took STP and went haywire. ‘Dennis Hughes was a nice guy and then he took STP and didn’t come back for a week. When he came back, he was like a mild-mannered Sid Vicious and made noises on his keyboard that sounded like a B-52. I thought it was fun but everybody else hated it. We left him behind somewhere – we couldn’t handle him and he got obnoxious about drugs too.’ Hughes later committed suicide.

Associated with the downfall of Haight-Ashbury, on 11 November pink wedge-shaped pills containing 20-micrograms of DOM hit the Haight. Haight-Ashbury Medical Clinic treated eighteen cases of acute toxic psychosis in five hours. When Barrett and Wynne-Willson took STP in San Francisco, this was in all likelihood the same ‘pink wedge’.

Roaming Haight-Ashbury well into the morning, taken to crash pads where strange timeless psychedelic air prevailed, Syd was cut adrift. Californian diversions proved overwhelming. To be confronted with Pat Boone, even when not having spent sleepless nights on Haight-Ashbury tripping on STP with Californian blondes at the height of psychedelia, might have left Syd rather disorientated.

The same day, photographer Baron Wolman photographed Pink Floyd at Casa Madrona Hotel in Sausalito, posing on the fire escape of the grand Victorian hotel. Syd is the manic centre of attention, with the group flanking him in seats overlooking the harbour. He clowns for the camera, with sugar lumps between teeth, mocking his own fondness for LSD, as his bemused bandmates study him. Frames later, in a marked mood change, he stares with an expression so venomous that the disturbance flares through the lens. Brooding and distant, Syd appears miles from the band members next to him. The photo session was for the cover of *Rolling Stone* magazine, though when editors saw their Winterland show that night they were so appalled they cancelled the feature.

'We went on, and started the first tune,' Waters recalled. 'Syd famously started strumming his bottom E string and turning the machine head down and lowering the tone of the string. He turned the machine head 'til the string fell off the guitar. He did the A string, then the D. Then he did all of them. When they were all hanging off the guitar that was the end of his performance for the evening.' Waters added, 'Very Dada, and very irritating.'

Nick Mason said, 'Syd went mad on that first American tour. He didn't know where he was most of the time. He detuned his guitar onstage. He just stood there rattling strings, a bit weird even for us.' Mason reflected on Barrett's disintegration: 'Syd detuning his guitar all the way through one number and striking strings is very modern. Very difficult for a group to follow or play with.'

'Syd literally went onstage and stared straight into space and de-tuned all his strings on his guitar and hit it until it was this god-awful noise,' confirmed Wright. 'We, of course, are thinking "What can we do?" Audiences didn't seem to notice. Great, they loved it.'

Hitting the space section of 'Interstellar Overdrive', Syd detuned his strings with a certain wilful defiance. A surer sign of his own internal

unravelling is difficult to imagine, though one wonders whether Barrett was showing group and audience what he had come to. Barrett took avant-garde gestures to the limit. Rather than playing with tuning as Keith Rowe did, he detuned strings all the way. To top it off, Syd took a tin whistle and let out a few sharp blasts.

Beyond the motifs Syd employed on 'Interstellar Overdrive' to hypnotic effect, detuning his guitar pushed past Keith Rowe's most avant-garde gesture. Barrett's anarchic humour turned to provocation, pushing his 'antic disposition' to see how far he could go. When Syd stood onstage picking a single note with a plectrum, echoing like sonar through darkened halls, or stood with arms hanging staring in glassy-eyed catatonia, was this performance art or mental illness? Only Barrett knew.

The group flew across country to play a one-hour set at the Cheetah Club in New York City on 12 November, before returning to Europe. Barrett is said to have walked offstage halfway through. Waters insisted to Andrew King that Syd should be fired. Syd seemed unaware, did not care, or was absorbed in the mazes of his mind. In resolute silence, Syd stared out the window back to Europe.

They flew direct to Rotterdam in the Netherlands to play the 'Hippy-Happy Fair', a three-day festival featuring the Jimi Hendrix Experience, Soft Machine, and Tomorrow among many others. Any happy hippies at this show were in for a rude awakening. An audience tape is the one other known recording of a Syd-era gig. The set list for the forty-four-minute show was 'Reaction in G', 'Pow R. Toc H.', 'Scream Thy Last Scream', 'Set the Controls for the Heart of the Sun' and a ragged 'Interstellar Overdrive'. Syd did not sing until about halfway through, and then he simply shouted over the din. An incongruous amateur talent contest followed Pink Floyd's performance.

'The Rotterdam tape is noteworthy for what Syd doesn't play,' observes Chris Moise. 'On each song, he seems to play the bare minimum, content to let Rick take the spotlight on every number. "Reaction in G" provides a good contrast. On the earlier Copenhagen recording Syd solos throughout the entire number save for a short section where Rick gets a solo. At Rotterdam, Syd plays the two-chord riff for

four minutes straight with no embellishment. He contributes little to "Interstellar Overdrive" save the main riff.'

Moise continues: 'Syd doesn't play anything inappropriate at this gig. Listening to his contributions toward the end of "Pow R. Toc H." one gets the feeling, unlike some solo recordings, [that] he could play well but had lost all enthusiasm. This is understandable, considering Pink Floyd had gotten off a transatlantic flight, having played New York the night before. Trying circumstances for the most sane group members.'

Opening with tuning-up and feedback, Pink Floyd rip into 'Reaction in G', with Mason banging in fury and Wright's Farfisa unusually busy. Animal sounds in 'Pow R. Toc H.' resemble the bridge point to 'Careful with That Axe, Eugene'. Waters sourly introduces 'Scream' with: 'This song is called "Old Woman with a Casket",' either speaking slowly for the foreigner's benefit, or with sarcasm directed towards Syd. Everyone involved overplays, with hints of the California sound, though the overriding influence here seems to be exhaustion.

Twink from Tomorrow, also on the bill and sharing a hotel with the Floyd, recalled that Barrett refused to talk to anyone. The rest of the group were reduced to passing him notes. His bandmate Keith West recalled to author Richie Unterberger: 'I'd seen him at a club two or three months before and we were all buddies. Three months later, he was almost comatose. Just sitting and not talking to anybody, acting very strange, staring people out, and being obnoxious and arrogant. We never realised what he was going through. People would talk behind his back and say, "He thinks he's so cool." We didn't know how serious it was.'

Barrett found difficulty in talking at all. In a laborious interview he explained, 'I certainly do get a feeling of what people are like and, really, the complication comes out in talking. This only comes out at certain times because of a feeling that talking is, in fact, a far less valuable thing and almost superfluous to everything else, to, I don't know, sensing the value of people. At the same time, it's a contradiction that words and talking to people should be difficult in any way. So, one is hesitant to say, "No, I can't say anything." I know as well this is something that occurs only at times, other times it doesn't, and it's cool.'

Coupled with long windedness, Syd's language became abstract, lacking cohesion and difficult to decipher. Jenny Spires insists, 'Syd's

breakdown was progressive. It happened over time, not overnight. I hadn't seen him much for a while between New Year 1967 and his return from Pink Floyd's American tour. It did seem to me on his return from America that something untoward had happened. I wondered then if he had been spiked. [He was] noticeably withdrawn, though still communicating with some. It was difficult to pin down any one time at which he changed.'

Iain 'Emo' Moore recalled, 'When he came back, he did break down a couple of times with me and cried quite a lot. I just think he had a bad time, had been given a lot of acid out there. America was so big, and he was beginning to question whether he wanted to be where he was. He had this thing about rules, his own world, his own life, and his own environment. He thought when he got to where he wanted to end up, that he would be in control of his life and everything around him. Of course, when you get there, it's worse than where you were before.'

Bookings made months before forced Barrett and company to embark on thirty-one shows across sixteen British cities. Impresarios Harold Davison and Tito Burns planned the first (and last) psychedelic package tour.

Debuting on 14 November at the Royal Albert Hall, the shows were organised with conveyor-belt precision. In forty-five minutes, Amen Corner, the Nice, Heir Apparent and Outer Limits filed through. Pink Floyd played a seventeen-minute set, as 'Set the Controls' increasingly supplanted 'Interstellar Overdrive'. On account of their three Top Five hits, the Move were billed above the Floyd and Jimi Hendrix closed with big hits and guitar pyrotechnics.

A photo of all the groups backstage shows Barrett hidden save for horror-struck eyes and hair resembling a fright wig. His expression is something to behold, indicating an inner implosion of gothic severity. Barrett took on the look of a Romantic poet in the tubercular mode of John Keats, combined with Nijinsky's harrowing broken puppet Petrushka.

Melody Maker wrote: 'The Pink Floyd threatened to walk out on the tour during the afternoon when it was said they could not use their own gear and a cinema screen behind the stage, as it would block the view for

fans seated in the rear. In the end, difficulties were resolved, the Floyd went on and the fans' view was blocked. The Floyd gave one of their colourful and deafening displays of musical pyrotechnics. Indeed all the groups were painfully loud, with all the agony increased by the horror of the Albert's acoustics.'

Barrett affected unawareness of the chaos he'd caused in America. He said, 'There's no gloom or depression for me. It's been very exciting, especially when I went to America for two weeks before the split up. Then we came back and played at the Albert Hall and it was very much a crescendo and I felt very good.'

Indeed, Barrett rose to the occasion and played a brilliant set. *Disc & Music Echo* reported: 'Very inventive music, with Nick Mason laying down some beautiful rhythms and guitarist Syd Barrett hitting some incredible flights of fantasy. They won rapturous applause, though from an audience which could have not been in the most part Pink Floyd fans. A very satisfying set.'

David O'List, guitarist for the Nice (and formerly mod group the Action) watched from the wings and was likewise impressed. 'Syd was an amazing guitarist. He really was, as much as Hendrix was in his own right.' O'List added, 'I was very struck by Syd's technique. His simple, sharp, punchy style was so different from anybody else's.'

The package tour often involved two shows a day, travelling the length and breadth of the British Isles in overnight coaches. Lindsay joined Syd for the first leg. They sat in silence in the back. Autumn began early that year, and was ice cold; short overcast days turning to freezing nights. Celebrating psychedelia's gossamer moods in pouring Birmingham rain proved difficult.

The group met with now standard bafflement, indifference or hostility from audiences. Some found them compelling. At the beginning of the tour, clouds sometimes parted and Barrett played brilliantly. Much depended on his mood on the day. The group had several strikes against them. You could not see them; you could not hear much of them. They were not dance music and did not play pop singles. Roger Waters called the package tour, the only one Pink Floyd ever was part of, 'a real nightmare'.

Thousands of young teenagers across Britain got a first taste of psychedelia at these shows. Hendrix and the Experience dazzled, playing 'Drivin' South' and 'Fire' to rabid crowds. 'I toured with Hendrix,' recalled Barrett. 'Lindsay and I used to sit on the back of the bus, with him up front. He would film us. We never spoke really. It was very polite. He was better than people really knew. Very self-conscious about his consciousness. He'd lock himself in the dressing room with a TV and wouldn't let anyone in. Hendrix was a perfect guitarist. That's all I wanted to do as a kid. Play a guitar properly and jump around. Too many people got in the way. It's always been too slow for me – playing, the pace of things. I mean, I'm a fast sprinter. The trouble was, after playing in the group for a few months, I couldn't reach that point.'

The Move's manager Tony Secunda watched from the sidelines. 'Once the Floyd started having hits, Syd changed dramatically,' he recalled to Dave Thompson. 'Blackhill were worried about Syd. They needed to keep the group's name out there. Nobody knew if Barrett was up to it. The general feeling was he was not. Different members of the group, and other bands as well, tried to get through to him, [but] he had this shell around him. Personally, the best thing that could have happened to him would have been to have a night out with the Move.'

The Move's drunken post-gig bacchanals were the stuff of legend. Barrett showed no interest. Move bassist Ace Kefford soon suffered an acid breakdown of his own, leaving the group to enter a mental hospital. Kefford found Barrett unreachable. 'Syd never spoke to anyone. He hardly moved sometimes, on another planet.' Kefford, from experience, knew LSD left one vulnerable to fear. 'He'd sit in a corner playing with a steam engine that puffed real smoke. I tried to talk to him about the engine. He seemed scared stiff. You can always tell by the eyes. Full of fear, man – paranoia. That's what acid does to you when you're feeling vulnerable. You're scared of everybody, scared of everything.'

On 17 November, Pink Floyd's long-delayed third single 'Apples and Oranges'/'Paintbox' was released, timed to tie in with the tour and Christmas shopping. Towing the party line, Barrett told the press, 'It's unlike anything we've ever done before. It's a new sound, got a lot of guitar in it. It's a happy song, and it's got a touch of Christmas. It's about

a girl who I just saw walking around town, in Richmond. The "apple and oranges" bit is the refrain in the middle.'

The tour bounced through seaside towns and across the Midlands, playing Victorian theatres and pavilions from Portsmouth to Glasgow. The moment they arrived at a venue, Syd would take off to wander around whatever town they found themselves in. He would return minutes before the set, play, jump offstage, wander some more, then return for the evening gig. Loping through provincial towns with wild long hair and pop-star clothes, it was miraculous that he wasn't beaten up by provincial bovver-boys.

'The Bournemouth Pavilion has probably never seen a night like it, all for about the same price as a packet of crisps nowadays,' recalls Floyd fan Dave Osborne. 'What remains memorable is the amazing moment when you hear something you have never heard before, something that does not appear to come from any known musical form you have ever come across. This was the night Pink Floyd blew my mind. Syd prowled the stage in long Afghan coat and made the goddamn strangest noises with his guitar I had ever heard in my life. Weeks later, I bought their debut album *The Piper at the Gates of Dawn* and listened to it in stoned amazement. Where had this noise come from? Outer space? Inner space? Nothing to compare *Piper* with, no trajectory of music somehow led to this. *Piper* stood alone, the one musical artefact worthy to truly deserve the name "psychedelic".'

Pete Drummond says, 'I compered the thirty-date tour with the Floyd, the Move, the Nice, Amen Corner, Eire Apparent, and headliner Jimi Hendrix. That tour played in theatres complete with curtains. I was told to stand in front of the tabs until the next group was ready. I ended up telling awful jokes to fill in, as there was no recorded music. The audience was not best pleased. After my second or third appearance, I had to endure a barrage of "fuck off!" night after night. I blame Roger Waters as each day he would come up and say "I've got a really good joke for you tonight!" I thought Syd was bright, funny and in no way peculiar or "mad" – but then I wasn't playing with him, just socialising before and after the gigs.'

Two nights later at City Hall in Sheffield, fan Adrian Holden observed that 'the Floyd were disappointing live that night with little verve of the

album. Distinct lack of guitar excitement suggests Syd was already wilting under physical and chemical strain of the lifestyle.' Another fan, Gee Smith, said, 'As Floyd were due to come out, a great big screen appeared on stage in the dim light. Then Floyd were onstage playing, projections and all. As they were doing "Astronomy Dominé" my friend who had seen them at previous Sheffield gigs – even helping put the drum kit together – turned to me and said with some concern, "That's not Syd Barrett," and it wasn't.' Accounts vary as to whether Syd's first no-show was at Sheffield or Nottingham.

The group's exasperation with Barrett grew in tandem with his wilful silences. In Blackpool, their first set of 'Stethoscope', 'Set the Controls' and 'Interstellar Overdrive' went off well. As dusk fell, Barrett went walkabout. The famed Blackpool Illuminations flickered on, lighting the promenade for a mile with brilliant lights. Barrett wandered through the amusements, taking in the scene, with 'Octopus' building in his mind.

Another brief happy interlude came after a show in Manchester, when Syd, Susie and Peter visited Beat poet Neil Oram in his country cottage at Haworth Village in West Yorkshire. Oram was a friend from the Free School, skinning up in Notting Hill in 1966, when everything seemed promising. Syd, in cosy surroundings with old faces around, shook off his catatonia and relaxed. They went clambering around the Pennines in search of traces of the Brontë sisters. Barrett smiled as they sat around a hearth fire in the ancient cottage, seated on the floor as autumnal evening fell. Round the hearth, they huddled, spending a rare quiet night in. The next morning, the band set off to Belfast with an eight-hour ferry ride across the Irish Sea.

A growing schism in Pink Floyd's immediate circle was clearly developing. Financial difficulties led Jenner and King to dismiss Wynne-Willson. John Marsh took over as lights man, receiving a wage rather than percentage. Marsh and his eighteen-year-old pregnant bride Linda cleaned slides while bumping around in the van between gigs. Wynne-Willson and Susie were content to leave the sinking ship.

'Heartbreaking,' says Wynne-Willson. After a long pause, he adds, 'And frightening to see the deterioration. Heartbreaking to see him getting into such a state. Frightening in those situations where there's nothing you can do to assist in any way. It wasn't that other people

weren't deteriorating. Pip Carter was a junkie and used to get into terrible states that were hard to believe. Pip also used to bring people around that were in terrible states. It's not as though there weren't people falling apart. Heartbreaking with Syd because he had been so vital and so light. He walked in a very light way. He had a very particular walk, with heels raised. Not that that is relevant to his state of mind, or maybe it was.' Jenny Lesmoir-Gordon adds, 'Syd just always had this wonderful bounce to his walk, very light, and that was nice. A bouncy walk, springing up on the ball of his foot.'

Pure exhaustion gave him a hangdog expression with marked black circles under the eyes. Fan Martyn Johnson recalled, 'I met Syd the day after the Floyd supported Jimi Hendrix on tour at Bristol Colston Hall. I'd been to the gig and the Floyd played one song – "Interstellar Overdrive". The next day, I met Rick Wright outside their hotel, got his autograph. He took me in to meet the rest of them, including Syd. We chatted about the album, and Syd's white Telecaster. He seemed absolutely normal, although he looked like he could have used a good fry-up.'

The departure of Peter and Susie left Syd alone, without friends to provide him with support. Syd, Susie and Peter, and sometimes Pip, formed the freak contingent on never-ending tours, smoking dope and eating vegetarian, in stark contrast to the beer-and-beef regimen of the rest. Next, Peter Watts became tour manager and worked the front of house sound, while John Marsh operated the lights. This loss of friends and allies had an immediate negative effect on Barrett. He struggled through four more shows in two cities, over two nights, interspersed with long rides on a tour coach full of rowdy young musicians. When they reached Nottingham, he vanished altogether, leaving the others to fend for themselves.

David O'List stepped in for Barrett during the first of two shows that evening. 'Every day when we reached a new town,' O'List recalled, 'Syd would go for a walk, and not get back to the venue until just a few minutes before Pink Floyd was due onstage. He'd play the show, go off again. Come back hours later, in time for the second. One night, he didn't turn up at all, so they asked me to go on.'

Having been given Barrett's floppy hat to wear, O'List jammed on 'Interstellar Overdrive', picking up the chords. 'A fairly straightforward guitar thing, so I was able to pick it up quickly. At first, I kept my back to the audience while we were playing. The audience was impatient, shouting, "Turn round, Syd!" I turned round. They all shut up immediately. Then turned back and carried on playing.'

Barrett tried to board a train back to London before the road crew caught up with him. He was brought back and played the second show that night. When they boarded the coach, Barrett would not as much as look at O'List and gave him the cold shoulder for the rest of the tour. Of the next night in Newcastle, O'List recalled, 'I was on standby for the next show at the next city, as they did not know if Syd was going to come back. He did and he looked embarrassed when he saw me backstage. They must have told him about me. This motivated him to continue because his next performance was good as usual.'

Still, Pink Floyd were jeered and booed by some. Glasgow, on 5 December, was the final night of the tour. Pink Floyd were again subjected to abuse, this time from bikers who showered them with Imperial pint glasses. Barrett stood under the hail of glass, blinking at stage lights that looked like an oncoming train. Was he coming or going? They left their guitars propped on the amplifiers, howling with feedback, like the Misunderstood, until stagehands flicked the power off.

Fan Gordon Phinn insists, 'Syd was not onstage, they appeared as a trio, and played, to my fifteen-year-old ears, quite well. The Nice and the Move also played very well, all hot bands that year, the Nice's "America" a Top Ten hit blowing me away with six minutes of rock, jazz, classical, and psychedelia. Roy Wood of the Move's lead guitar, mostly through wah-wah pedal, was especially impressive. Jimi and the lads blew everyone away. Mitchell wearing a bright red jumpsuit and playing like a man possessed. Too much excitement for one night, we were much too young to appreciate what we had seen.'

One Robert Anderson wrote to music weeklies and complained: 'What a boring load of rubbish the Pink Floyd turned out to be. Those stupid lights and painful noises made me sick. If anything can kill pop music, it is this insulting nonsense. Thank God some people had the sense to jeer and handclap their puerile act.'

The following night, back in London, Pink Floyd staggered into the Royal College of Art for a gig. Opening act Bonzo Dog Doo-Dah Band, led by ginger-haired, octagonal-bespectacled Viv Stanshall, meandered through trad jazz, satire, and old-empire vaudeville camp. Playing euphonium and ukulele, the group brought back a bygone era while gate-crashing headlong into the present with songs like 'I'm the Urban Spaceman'. The Bonzos sprang from Goldsmiths College canteen, and took their music-hall act on the road, wearing inspired 1920s attire. Songs like 'We Are Normal', from *The Doughnut in Granny's Greenhouse*, were very much in the spirit of Syd Barrett. Barrett was quick to notice this, spurring him to want to bring in a more trad jazz or music-hall flavour to Pink Floyd.

David Gale says, 'When I was at the RCA we had a benefit ball for a student who couldn't play his fees. It was called the "Horror Ball" and everyone dressed in horror costumes. The Floyd agreed to come. We then got all sorts of rock bands to come as well. We made a huge amount of money for this student and many other students who didn't have any money. Syd's rock'n'roll colleagues then will tell you his behaviour on tour was becoming deeply peculiar. Syd was a big rock star now and behaving extremely weirdly indeed on tour, standing onstage with an un-tuned guitar. I clearly remember Syd was already gone. He stood on the very edge of the stage and strummed an un-tuned guitar.'

One wonders what visions an exhausted Barrett saw as he looked into an audience dressed as vampires and goblins. Many of his friends were there in costume. One year ago, everything seemed so promising. Syd's close friends in the audience watched in dismay, Nigel and Jenny, Sue Kingsford, David Gale, Po and Storm among them. David Gilmour showed up and thought the band a right mess. 'The group just before Syd departed had got into an impossible situation. No one wanted to book them. Gigs were all empty because they were so bad.'

Nick Mason caught sight of Gilmour after the show. He hinted that changes were afoot. His help might be needed. The other Floyds knew Gilmour from gigs played with Joker's Wild. He seemed the logical choice to join Pink Floyd as second guitarist to shore up Barrett's erratic performances. Gilmour said, 'Nick sidled up to me and told me things

were getting desperate. I was to keep it under my hat but they were thinking of making some sort of a change. Would I be interested?'

On 8 December, Pink Floyd played in Chislehurst Caves in Kent. The caves were old chalk mines turned into a tourist trap with fossils, Druidic altars, a maze, Roman mines, and cavalier mantraps – all fake. Temperature in the caves was a constant forty-five degrees Fahrenheit year round. The group shivered deep in the earth for what was literally their most underground gig ever. Furry boutique coats and knotted scarves could not ward off the chill. The caves gave off a sinister aura. It was here that David Bowie's half-brother Terry went into full schizophrenic breakdown at around the same time.

That week, Barrett and Waters watched a screening of a promo film for 'Jugband Blues', which Jenner and King wanted to issue as next single in the new year. The Central Office of Information, for reasons best known to them, commissioned the film for insertion into their cinemagazine *This in Britain*, sent to far-flung Commonwealth posts. At the end Syd murmurs his parting questions with a fixed stare, before pointedly turning away. He looked ravaged by exhaustion.

Peter Jenner told *Melody Maker*: 'The group has been through a very confusing stage over the past few months and this has been reflected in their work. You can't take four people of this mental level, they used to be architects and an artist, give them big success and not expect them to get confused. They are coming through a de-confusing period now. They are not just a record group. They pull people in to see them and their album has been terrifically received in this country and America. They've got tremendous things ahead of them. They are only just starting.' Little did he realise that Pink Floyd's success hinged on Syd's leaving Pink Floyd. There were contractual obligations, bookings and mounting debts that took the group years to pay off. Their booking fee was half what it had been while the band were in the charts.

TV science series *Tomorrow's World* filmed a presentation on Mike Leonard's light machines on 12 December. Pink Floyd played instrumental backing as Leonard showed various machines and techniques with spectral swirls projected through crystals and hammered discs onto a screen. The group drove to Highgate, where Marsh and Watts hauled their gear up to Leonard's attic. They revisited rehearsals in

that same attic with a jocular cover of Booker T & the MG's 'Green Onions'. Next, they played a germinal 'Careful with That Axe, Eugene', which Syd performed with fluid ease, squalling gently through a wah-wah pedal. As the camera zooms in, a startled Syd stares with haunted eyes. Leonard, watching from the sidelines, remembers the marked change in Barrett, and says, 'The Pink Floyd found it more difficult to accommodate he was not "there", or was not in the mood to play. In the end they had to drop him.'

'He stopped listening and was in another world,' Mason insisted. 'Oblivious to what was going on onstage. To be honest, we didn't really know what was going on. It might not have been that he was completely mad. He might have been furious he was in a world he didn't want to inhabit anymore.'

The group dragged through some final shows to round out the year. One gig in Cornwall was so bad that opener P.P. Arnold was brought back onstage. Four days rest followed, and did them all a world of good. Barrett bounced back after some deep sleep and a break from the pressure cooker of the group. The group met at BBC's Maida Vale Studio to record a *Top Gear* session on 20 December and arrived in good spirits.

The visit to Highgate must have stirred memories, for on 'Vegetable Man' Pink Floyd depart from the studio version with an R&B rave up. Barrett interjected a deadpan, 'Oh, sock it to me!' Nick Mason hammered drums with gusto as Syd sang about nylon socks with grim precision, percolating underneath false bonhomie. The mood wavers, with tempo changes galore, dissolving into garbled improvised voices. Black humour becomes plain with the campy chorus, a take-off of the *Batman* theme. A fluid and taut Barrett guitar solo took an effortless leap into the jangling middle eight bars. The group launched into an extended jam reminiscent of Bo Diddley's live *Beach Party* album.

On 'Scream Thy Last Scream' Barrett's sublime guitar work was solid proof that his muse had not deserted him. Unlike the studio version, here Barrett sang lead vocal in unison with Mason. With steady timing, Syd played forceful guitar lines, a crystalline solo, and inserted a phrase from the Butterfield Blues Band's 'East/West'. He underpins Wright's organ solo with repeating rhythm riff, building to an escalating guitar slide.

Barrett was often charged with holding the rhythmic structure together, his timekeeping essential.

Rick Wright turned in a bluesy jazz piano solo on ‘Pow R. Toc H.’, an emerging element that developed across their sixties albums. Barrett laced the solo with stinging guitar while Waters made frantic gecko noises. On ‘Jugband Blues’ kazoos are substituted for the Salvation Army’s brass, with Wright on a penny whistle. (Chris Beard of the Purple Gang was certain they inspired Barrett here with their use of kazoo on ‘Granny Takes a Trip’.)

Barrett sang with clarity and impeccable diction, in a voice like cut glass. Wright leaned in with an organ barrage, Waters struck sonar blips on his Rickenbacker bass, and the extended coda featured staccato drumming from Mason. After a hypnotic volley of ‘*la-la-la’s*’ underneath a long improvised section with guitar clangs, and a Waters bassline that resurfaced on ‘Let There Be More Light’. A farewell coda from Barrett follows, with organ and background vocals from Wright. This inspired session raises doubts about Barrett’s ‘madness’. In this relaxed setting, he shone. Amazing what a few days rest can do. One of Barrett’s most compelling performances.

That afternoon, Pink Floyd returned to EMI for the first time in almost two months, where they added crowd noises and bizarre elf-like voices to ‘Scream Thy Last Scream’. After the final build up, elf-voiced feedback swells into a vibrating, stuttering, echoing frenzy, so reminiscent of the DMT-experience to suggest that Syd evoked it intentionally. Though Mason sings lead and contributes a submerged sped-up vocal, Syd might be chiming on choruses and laughter in the mid-section. The recording is rife with nervous laughter from all involved. In the fade-out were overdubbed sound effects of a train leaving a station.

Norman Smith told *EQ*: ‘His final departure had nothing to with how he was working in the studio. During the time I saw him, he was together. He performed as much as I wanted him to. Syd did behave very peculiarly. There was no drug taking. I wouldn’t allow that in the sessions.’

According to John Marsh, Barrett played one his final Floyd gigs at ICI Fibres Club, Pontypool, Monmouthshire. Phil Compton was then an

apprentice at the ICI Fibres Club and says, ‘We did have the Pink Floyd there for a Christmas dance in December 1967. The Social Club in the Rugby Club House was a massive ballroom. I can’t remember a Brylcreem episode. We used to have a lot of bands in around Christmastime as the month was very festive.’

The gig was marked by a desperate incident. Doctor Sam Hutt, in Jonathon Green’s classic *Days in the Life: Voices from the English Underground, 1961-71*, recalled that Barrett was given further ammunition to fuel his spiralling insanity. ‘I remember near the end with Syd him coming up and somebody had given him a bottle of mandies. Mandies were the big bouncing around drug, dodgy indeed. Probably a good idea they took them off the market. Barbiturates are plain bastards, but mandies have this awful seductiveness about them. Syd appeared onstage with this jar of Brylcreem, having crushed the mandies into little pieces, mixing them with Brylcreem and putting Brylcreem and broken mandy tablets all over his hair. When he went onstage the heat of the lights melted the Brylcreem and it all started to drip down his face with these bits of mandrax.’

John Marsh said, ‘One time we played the ICI Fibres Club in Pontypool. We’re all set up; Pink Floyd come on the stage. I’m on the lighting tower at the back of the hall. The group start up, everything sounds strange. Pink Floyd are chugging along but the only noises coming from Syd seem to be continual and repetitious middle Cs and nothing else. I looked down one of the telephoto lenses at the stage. There’s all this fat and grease all over Syd. He’s standing there looking totally out of it. Syd for some reason had decided to get into Brylcreem and thirty seconds before Pink Floyd go onstage Syd decides to Brylcreem his hair. At the moment he’s about to apply the substance someone says, “Come on, let’s go.”

‘What does Barrett do? He up-ends the jar of Brylcreem on his head and because it’s hot the whole shooting match slips onto his head and he walks onstage with a glistening half-pound of Brylcreem on his head. Through the set under stage lighting and heat, it gradually melts and Syd ends up at the end of the set looking like a guttered candle, except he doesn’t know it and he can’t see it. One of the last gigs Syd played with them.’

Barrett's pranks took on the cast of desperation, whether vanguard statement or 'antic disposition'. At best, speculating what was at work in Syd's mind is tantamount to discerning an object by watching shadows dance along a wall. With not a word from Barrett, whether he was mad or not is inference and assumption. Still, Syd's antic disposition turned on him. In driving everyone else mad, Barrett may have succeeded in driving himself mad. Like Hamlet, Barrett overstepped the mark and set his own tragedy in motion. Robert Graves wrote of the 'doubtful madness of Hamlet' – madness faked or real, and this was equally applicable to Syd.

The next night, Pink Floyd trudged to trendy nightclub the Speakeasy, north of Soho. Run by their booker Tony Howard and managed by a friend of the Krays, the 'Speak' was a swinging London hangover, a record business and rock group hangout. At the Speakeasy, deals for money, drugs and sex were cut between managers, journalists, roadies, groupies, and bands.

Steve Howe of Tomorrow, now managed by Blackhill, said, 'I was rushed back to London to play with Pink Floyd because Syd was thought to be too out of it. He showed up at the gig, just before I was about to go on. I didn't know Pink Floyd's material in any detail. Yet I was rushed around and thought to be going on casually with a group I'd never rehearsed with. All I was going to do was going to improvise.'

Other group members were still casting about for someone to back Syd onstage, full-time. They sniffed around a Nice gig at the ICA, to poach Davey O'List, though their canny manager ushered the young guitarist away. The group also thought of ringing Jeff Beck's management and offering him the guitarist slot, though they thought better of asking Beck to join a sinking group without hits.

Everyone was surprised when 'Apples and Oranges' did not become a hit, nor make the pop charts at all – a commercial failure. Asked how he felt, Barrett shrugged that he 'couldn't care less. All we can do is make records that we like. If the kids don't, then they won't buy it. The kids dig the Beatles and Mick Jagger not so much because of their music. Because they always do what they want to do and to hell with everyone else. The kids know this.'

If rock music was the soundtrack to rebellion, Barrett found he could not rebel anymore. His view was naïve but guileless. Barrett, referring to the record business, told the truth, ‘All middlemen are bad.’ But, middlemen were what he was surrounded by, each a midwife to the delivery of golden eggs he no longer would, or could, deliver. Barrett made a prophetic point: ‘Ideally, groups should record their own music, press their own records, distribute them and sell them.’ He foresaw the punk and indie rock explosion of independent labels and bands, though ten years too soon. Channelling the *gestalt* of another time, while tangled in the present.

The failure of the third single, coupled with Barrett’s erratic behaviour onstage and refusal to play the hits, meant bookings became scarce. Money dried up faster than they thought possible. Complaints from audiences, bookers and venue owners spelled a sour end to a meteoric year. No live shows meant no cash flow, and this did not augur well for Pink Floyd’s beleaguered finances.

Jenner said, ‘The way we ran things was so haphazard. At one time, we had the Floyd, Andrew and me, June Child, two roadies and two lights people all on salary. We did not keep any control over expenditure. Ludicrous amounts were spent on ridiculous things. The money scene got very unstable from the reputation the group had gained for being unreliable.’

Pink Floyd catapulted to fame. Syd Barrett, at twenty-one, became a star. However, he was also in a bind, his persona as Piper of the Underground unmanageable. The schism had to come, with one sacrificed for the other. Barrett, realising that this creature he had created threatened to take hold of him, began running from his shadow. *I Ching*, a map of Barrett’s life if ever there was one, warned of reaching for the prize too soon. Barrett stood at a turning point, alone, unsure what to do.

The ‘Christmas on Earth Continued’ spectacular at London’s vast Olympia Exhibition Halls on 22 December was Syd Barrett’s final grand appearance with the Pink Floyd. It was the winter solstice. A change was due to come. Last of the year’s multi-media spectaculars, Pink Floyd, the Jimi Hendrix Experience, the Move, the Animals, Tomorrow, Traffic, and Soft Machine, all came together for one last hurrah.

Poor promotion and a bitter winter freeze made for a low turnout in the cavernous steel and glass Grand Hall. Two stages were constructed on either end, so one group could set up while the other played. Ian Macintosh, the student from Oxford so inspired by the Ally Pally event that he dropped into the underground, was on hand. ‘The Olympia was a much more cavernous venue than the Ally Pally. The focus was on two stages, facing each other across the vast hall. Bands were playing alternately, causing the ten-thousand-strong crowd to turn, first left for forty minutes, then right and so forth, like paisley penguins!’ Herds of cattle would be more apt, as the Olympia held livestock exhibitions when not hosting the psychedelic proletariat.

Two hundred different projectors cast slides, films and liquid lights throughout the Grand Hall. In the adjoining National Hall, vintage films screened on drop cloths with light shows flanking either side, creating jarring juxtapositions. Film crews directed by David Larcher filmed from a centre platform. Jeffrey Shaw blew up plastic circus inflatables, while elsewhere a tatty funfair atmosphere prevailed with a paddling pool and tropical papier-mâché trees. Soft Machine barnstormed through their one-riff number ‘We Did It Again’ and dragged a porcelain bathtub onstage with them, which Robert Wyatt leapt into at the climax.

Macintosh was awed as lightshow operators unleashed a phalanx of synchronised strobe lights, while Tomorrow played (‘the most powerful strobe light effects I’ve ever witnessed’). Twink’s wiry arms flailed as he performed a mimed fight with bassist John ‘Junior’ Wood, while Steve Howe covered bases from raga to classical to metal on guitar. Jimi Hendrix Experience bassist Noel Redding commented to Dave Thompson about the strobe lights. ‘These things started going. It was insane. I spent most of the show standing behind my amp, with my back to the lights.’

The Move blazed through a string of hits, not about to be blown offstage as they were a year before by Pink Floyd. When the Floyd set up at 3:45am, the crowd milled in curious anticipation. An air of ritual solemnity was evident as John Marsh’s new 3D light show swirled around the hall. The road crew assembled a trio of five-foot-tall Perspex pyramids across the Olympia stage. Concentric circle motifs picked up

and refracted blazing light projections. Introduced by John Peel, Pink Floyd filed onstage.

June Child arrived, dressed in a striped trouser suit, her blonde hair in plaits. ‘I was the money lady, the heavy. I always used to go to the promoter and collect. I’d put them in my bag and I’d put it in the car and I’d drive the group back. This was the last gig Syd played with the Floyd, this massive, huge stage, this huge auditorium packed. Like doing the Roundhouse but bigger. Concession stalls all round, selling incense, everything wonderful. They might have got a grand, top of the bill. They went on and we couldn’t find Syd, then I found him in the dressing room, so gone. I kept saying, “Syd, it’s June, it’s me, look at me.”’ Barrett was frozen in catatonia, sitting rigid like a stone. Waters came into the dressing room to see what was wrong. Assessing the severity of the situation, he joined Child in trying to coax Barrett to stand up.

‘We’re trying to get Syd up. Get him together to go and play. He could not speak, catatonic. Roger Waters and I got him on his feet. We got him to the stage. He had a white Stratocaster we put round his neck. He walked onstage. The audience went spare because they loved them. The group started to play and Syd stood there, guitar round his neck and arms hanging down. I was in the wings, Peter at one side, Andrew on the other. We’re looking at each other and wondering what to do. Suddenly he put his hands on the guitar and we thought, “Great, he’s going to do it,” and he just stood there, tripping out of his mind. He looked around. Syd couldn’t even stand up for a set, let alone do anything else. You have to credit Roger credit for getting the other two together and making a half-assed set. Peter Jenner and Andrew King were frantic. Pulling out their hair.’

Peter Jenner hurried across behind the stage and told June in strained stage whisper, ‘Go and sit in the car.’ June hurried out the back, money in an envelope, and got into the Bentley. After three or four short numbers, Pink Floyd fled the stage with Barrett in tow. The promoter realised Pink Floyd were not going to finish their set, shouted at Jenner and King for ‘the chick with the money’. Jenner replied, ‘I’m awfully sorry, she’s gone. She had to leave early.’

With the promoter in a rage, Waters and Jenner half-dragged Syd to the car, while Mason, Wright and King got all the guitars and ran to the

Bentley. Child revved the engine. With everyone in, she sped the lumbering vehicle out of the Olympia loading zone. The promoter, realising he had been conned, came storming out back doors, shaking his fist and shouting abuse. Everyone was relieved as they drove down Earl's Court Road – save for Syd, rigid with shock.

The event proved a turning point for Barrett. Roger Waters's recall of the gig resonated as well. In the early seventies, Waters fell ill with virulent hepatitis before a Pink Floyd show. Obliged to perform, he was injected with a muscle relaxant by a doctor backstage. Waters recalled the gig as the longest two hours of his life, playing with arms like lead. This episode, combined with Syd's catatonia at the Olympia, formed a horrific scene in *The Wall*. Catatonic, Pink is given an injection, dragged onstage tearing at his own skin, in chrysalis from pop star to fascist leader. There were further echoes of Syd being dragged to *Top of the Pops* by his own road crew.

'Syd was casualty of the so-called "Psychedelic Period" we were meant to represent,' observed Waters. 'Everybody believed we were taking acid before we went onstage. One of us was, Syd. Syd had a big overdose of acid, very frightening. I couldn't believe what had happened, because he came [back] a different person.' What Waters referred to as 'a big overdose of acid', psychologists call psychotic break. Waters later observed that LSD accelerated Syd's schizophrenia. 'Who knows what he might have done without it. I don't think Syd was driven crazy by too much acid. The symptoms of mental illness he had were exacerbated by acid. I don't think it made him ill.'

LSD aggravated some of Syd's underlying problems, though the precise cause of his breakdown remains unclear. LSD is not known to cause brain damage, nor is incidence of psychosis among LSD users proportionally greater than the general populace. LSD psychosis is a drug-induced schizophreniform reaction in persons vulnerable to substance abuse and psychosis. Secondary factors, genetic and environmental, contributed to Syd's breakdown.

His performances, charismatic bordering on worrying, were out of step and out of tune with the group. The experiment Barrett worked hard to cultivate slipped out his hands. The criterion for exploration dissolved into white noise. His musicianship became erratic, with the Binson echo

unit bouncing an endless loop of guitar brilliance while Syd stared at hypnotic flickering lights, looking for a shadow of his elusive muse, ever more distant.

McKintosh said, 'Syd was sitting on the floor, right out front. He looked beautiful in every sense, Dylan curls, satin and scarf. Terry shouted in my ear, "Syd's guitar isn't plugged in!" Sure enough, Syd's arm hung loosely over his famous Telecaster, no lead evident. He gazed across the crowd – calm. Disengaged with his group, the full catastrophe!' Despite Barrett's total detachment, guitar blasted from the speaker cabinets. In the wings, unseen hands picked along to Syd's parts and accompanied Pink Floyd. Syd stood hunched over his guitar, sweating profusely, hair wilting under the lights. John Newey, who was in the Olympia audience, observed, 'He stood there as if on another planet. He contributed very little and his arms were hanging limply down.'

Andrew King looked on in despair. 'The evening was gruesome because the Floyd were falling apart in front of our eyes. I saw them worse when we were in America but this was bad enough. It gives me shivers to think of it. There was little communication between Syd and the rest of Pink Floyd. It's hard to manage a group in that state. He seemed withdrawn, much of the time he seemed fine. The group – everyone – felt, "How could we go on like this?" I'm sure Syd did too. Unreliability was an element but there was more to it. Directionless. I don't think they've ever played worse. The rest of Pink Floyd gritted teeth, stood there for an hour and sort of played their instruments.'

The last concert of the year parted the waters between psychedelia and hard rock. When the Jimi Hendrix Experience took the stage all light shows were turned off and Marshall stacks took precedence. Hendrix appeared with his Gibson Flying Arrow guitar and closed the door on the first glittering phase of psychedelia with out-and-out hard rock. Night turned to day. At 8:00am, the last light shows flickered off. Masses filed into the ice-cold morning amid rubbish scattered over the Exhibition Hall. Thus, psychedelia ended, the cold morning heralded a new dawn. Barrett rode the wave into the trough of the next.

Hendrix's Flying Arrow-led hard rock and Traffic's communal jams pointed the way to the next phase in rock, rich but not as compelling as

psychedelia's blinding flash. Leaden British blues-rock drumming slowed the tempo. The new music urged a return to roots. Bob Dylan's pared to the bone *John Wesley Harding* was released five days later and had profound influence. If not, then blues clichés and *faux* revolutionary rhetoric. Psychedelia splintered into hard rock, ever-so-intricate folkies, boogie bands and progressive doodling. From here on, the English music scene was dominated by blues-based hard rock, or self-indulgent progressive productions. Experimental, whimsical and inner-looking psychedelia waned.

Never again would AMM, Ginger Johnson's African Drummers, or Donovan share a stage with Pink Floyd – much less the People Show, Exploding Galaxy or Giant Sun Trolley. Clowns and jugglers packed up and went on their way, appearing sporadically at outdoor festivals. Supergroups came and went, flared trousers extended, trailing in mud at anticlimactic festivals. Long hair grew longer, unkempt and matted. Underground peacocks shed colourful plumes to blend back in with dirty and practical earth tones of radicals and beatniks of yore.

Interaction between audience and bands dwindled, as crowds sat back and watched like stoned lemmings. No more dancing, just pounding PA systems with throbbing hypnotic bass and shrieking guitars, all in the name of progress. In consolidating ground broken with such fervour since the Beatles fired up rock'n'roll and R&B became soul, innovations became systematic. Playing took precedence over invention. Underground went overground with listless shuffles to the stage. They sat down, got stoned and tuned out. Jeff Dexter's Implosion package shows at the Roundhouse were one example. A punter recalled, 'The audience sat in the middle just listening – after all we were far too cool to dance. When you hear live recordings from that era, you can often hear cries of "Sit down!"'

The group went on an extended Christmas break, with no rehearsals, gigs or studio sessions scheduled. For Barrett, Lindsay Corner stated bluntly to Kris DiLorenzo her view that by Christmas, 'Chronic schizophrenia had set in.'

Syd's exit from Pink Floyd began during an ill-fated trip to Wales. With three weeks off, Barrett convinced Jenner and King to lend him

Blackhill's cottage in the misty Brecon Beacons. Nigel Lesmoir-Gordon suggested they spend the holiday there with their girlfriends. With Syd off to Wales, the rest of Pink Floyd reconvened. Unsure what to do, Roger, Nick and Rick went round to Egerton Court to visit Storm Thorgerson. Conversation around the kitchen table turned to what to do about Syd. Waters said, 'It got to a point where we had to say to him he should leave because we respected him as a writer. His live performances were useless because he was working out so many things none of us understood. He would detune his guitar and strum loose strings. We used to come offstage bleeding because we hit things in frustration.'

Gilmour said, 'Just after Christmas, right after their Olympia gig, they sent a message […] for me to get in touch for taking the job… They just said, "Did I want to?" I said, "Yes" – simple as that. It was impossible for me to understand the way Syd's mind was working. Also from having been to two or three gigs.'

Jenny remembers, 'Nigel and I, Stash de Rola and girlfriend Gay, Syd and Lindsay went to Wales. We went there to take acid.' The acid weekend alternated between comedy and potential tragedy. 'We sent Stash to get some logs,' Jenny says. 'He came back with some cans and mud all over his shoes and said, "Let all mud be velvet!"' When they got a fire going, Stash became convinced he could sit in the hearth, full of burning logs, and escape unscathed. 'Stash said, "I could sit on this fire and if you have faith I won't die,"' recalls Jenny. 'I was the one who said, "No, don't sit on the fire, you'll burn yourself."' The police had already been there the day before. Jenny said to Stash, 'The policemen might come back and they'll wonder where you are. Stash would have burned himself. I stopped that from happening. Everyone was being irresponsible. We felt if we loved one another and had faith than we could do anything.'

'Syd was quite strange there,' recounts Nigel. 'Definitely very strange there. We did not take too much notice or worry about it. Standing balanced on a wine bottle, rocking, his hands on the low ceiling, for hours.' That Syd had suffered a destabilising blow, from within or without, was clear. Barrett's behaviour became most erratic, his high-spirited pranks and jokes ever more unusual. 'He wasn't communicating

with us there at all,' explains Jenny. 'He tripped with us, and just urinated out the door and said "Wae hae!"'

'He shit right outside the door as well, strange, looking back,' adds Nigel. 'He seemed like a nuisance. Lindsay was having a hard time there. Syd was a strange man. We just thought he was on acid. He became more of a court jester figure when we went to Wales than before. Syd was out of it. We were out of our heads as well. It's lucky any of us survived.'

'Syd was a nuisance then' Jenny says. 'I remember him really looking at you in the eye, and that being odd.'

'Once there it was decided to attempt a magical exploration of the hidden side,' said Stash de Rola to *Late Night*'s Jon Allan. 'We took acid together and formed a star by linking hands. This amazing current went through all these linked energies. Two circles of light, one spinning in one direction, the other in a counter direction, stopped individual identities and form.

'We became one another. I remember Jenny's voice echoing, saying, "Oh, you're my grandmother!" to Gay. There were transfers occurring at full speed. Changes went faster and faster, as though one was practically levitating. This whole circle of our linked energies was levitating everything. There was one problem though, I had always fancied Syd's girlfriend Lindsay. Lindsay was at my right and I was holding her hand. Gay was on my left, or Jenny. Lindsay let go suddenly, abruptly, broke up, doubled in two and burst into tears. In breaking the circle, it was as though a sledgehammer had hit the side of this earthenware jar full of extraordinary energy concentrated and built up. A tremendous outpouring totally unseated everything, as though the cottage had been hit by a cosmic tornado. From then on things were slightly divergent. The group broke up and we opened doors and it was rainy as usual.'

In Wicca, magic circles are said to contain concentrated energy raised from chanting. After a magic circle is cast, a sphere of energy forms. Breaking the circle was considered disastrous. Wiccans took great precautions to cut a door into the circle with ritual knife, after which anything could pass through without harm. 'Reconnecting' lines 'closed' the door. Syd's informal initiation into the occult ended on a sour note. If one is given to believe in the supernatural, what they did was conjure a dark globe.

De Rola said, ‘Syd and I, because of Lindsay, sat opposite each other, looked into each other’s eyes, and we had a joust people might have done during medieval times with spears. We were transported through many different dimensions. At some point, the focus must have shifted somehow and the distraction must have upset him. At one point, we were in a nursery. This nursery had acetate satin on the walls – full of toys, luxurious and comfortable. The nursery had stuffed animals made of that same material.

‘I looked up at Syd. He had become this weird teddy bear lying in the corner, this odd teddy bear toy, reduced in size. I looked at him, hauled him around. Somehow, we got out, got back, and eventually came down. Then Syd started being very weird. He picked up an acoustic guitar we had there. He played it very badly, very odd. Then he started singing “She Loves You” by the Beatles but he sang it all wrong. Gay said, “Syd, what’s the matter? Why have you. You’ve become a teddy bear!” Teddy bear Syd remained teddy bear Syd, this weird toy from that room. He remained in that children’s nursery, his mind stuck in that magical place.

‘What made up Syd’s abilities, his strengths as a pop star, his personality and psychic health, remained behind, casualty of that night’s exercise. He lost his sanity. I guess you could say he went insane. I always felt the only way to remedy this would have been to go back into the circle, back into that nursery to bring him out… We left the next day. I never saw Syd after that. I heard he never recovered from that night, that he left the group, and began giving away all his possessions.’

When Syd returned to London, the general feeling among his friends was that his spirit had been broken, victim of what *I Ching* called the ‘pursuit of unchecked pleasure’. He was displaying classic symptoms of schizophrenia, though whether or not he was actually schizophrenic remains a highly controversial and unpopular topic. That Barrett lost his way is undeniable. Some characterise his decline as descent into morbid schizophrenia, like musical chairs where one never gets to sit down. By clinical definition, Syd Barrett was schizophrenic. A textbook case: his catatonic episodes, loosening speech associations, aberrant behaviour, sudden violence, extreme moods, impaired facial expression (or ‘lack of affect’) and paranoia fit the description. Still, sanity is not tallied on a

scorecard. Others argue that schizophrenia does little to explain the bizarre circumstances Barrett found himself in.

Barrett's dilemma mirrored his situation. Sudden fame, drugs, an unstable home life and a profound identity crisis, personality conflicts with peers, and the unreasonable demands made on him, aggravated whatever underlying disposition to mental illness he may have had. Pressure was on him to perform to hostile audiences, sing, play guitar, be interviewed by witless journalists, have his photo snapped, and write commercial songs. In short, compelled to be Syd Barrett, pop star.

In three years, so much had happened. Eventually even his extraordinary existence as a pop star faded. It was too much to think about. Fame began becoming less than he had imagined. He couldn't justify meeting interviewers, obviously nothing of interest would occur. The group got to be so much like a job.

Syd's rise and fall paralleled that of the psychedelic underground, stride for stride, and pointed to LSD. Vagueness and abstraction were substituted for logic and analysis. Catatonia alternated with exaggerated motion. Waving his arms in the air, casting spectral shadows, was Syd signalling for help or warning of impending danger?

Once dazzling psychedelic colours gave way to murky darkness, as stage act became offstage reality. Barrett stood stock-still at the edge. Barrett's fantasy scarecrow seemed prophetic, as though Syd foresaw his progression to catatonia with chilling clarity. Experiencing perceptual distortions apart from drugs, mental breakdown is akin, in experiential terms, to being submerged underwater. Time slowed, and despite surface awareness, perceptions changed to fit the setting. Barrett's breakdown could be seen as a self-protective psychic exile from extreme stress.

For a creative mind in its formative stages and in the absence of foundation, acid was a jigsaw puzzle without pieces. Peter Jenner said, 'Syd was extraordinarily creative and what happened was catastrophic: a total burnt-out case. All his talent came out in a flood in two years and then it was burnt out.'

George Harrison, speaking in *The Beatles Anthology*, was horrified when he looked at liquid LSD under a microscope. 'LSD looked like bits of old rope. I thought that I couldn't put that into my brain anymore.' A passage Barrett lifted word for word from Hilaire Belloc for the original

‘Matilda Mother’ seems apt: ‘*The chief defect of Henry King/ Was chewing little bits of string/ At last, he swallowed some, which tied/ Itself in ugly knots inside*.’

In the aftermath of Wales, Nigel and Jenny looked at their lives. ‘Paul Charrier had told us about Sant Mat when we were back in Cambridge,’ Jenny says. ‘I wasn’t interested until William Pryor and Ponji Robinson came back from India and told us about it. Dave Gilmour, Nigel, Stash, and Emo were all in our room at Egerton Court when Ponji and William walked in the door and told us all about it. That was it. I knew then that what was what I wanted to do.’

The Lesmoir-Gordon’s travelled to India to stay at ashram Dera Baba Jaimal Singh. They stayed in Dera for four months with the master, learning about the Path of the Enlightened Masters. ‘We were initiated there,’ explains Jenny. ‘There were four principles: diet (no meat, fish or eggs), no alcohol and drugs, to lead a moral life, whatever that is, and the master said no to sex out of marriage. Later, if you were initiated, you did two and a half hours meditation a day. There were no parallels with Maharishi’s system of mediation. When the Beatles got into transcendental meditation, Paul Charrier had already come back from India. The way things were going people realised you could not go on with that life, certainly not for me. Acid was an indulgence, like going through the back door. Taking something without having the background made people very wobbly. Taking LSD, we saw things we were not ready to see. Through meditation, you saw many of these things, probably why many people gave up LSD.’

Sant Mat’s meditation was aimed at accessing a higher consciousness, and exploring beyond reality. ‘A guide told you what to look out for,’ Jenny says. ‘People thought they knew what they were about, only to find they did not. The master said, “Go and live a normal life, marry, have children and a household.” He said being a hermit was a mistake.’

‘People gave up tripping for meditation, and decided to [seek enlightenment] the hard way,’ explains Nigel. ‘The draw of meditation was to get to higher consciousness without drugs. Drugs showed there were altered states, seemingly higher awareness. The master said,

“Indeed there are higher states, higher and higher. They are inside you. The mind is just one level. LSD is all to do with the mind.”

‘What Jenny says is right, some people had taken enough. They had gone as far as they could. I wasn’t so very frivolous with LSD. We did do it seriously, and conducted experiments with consciousness expansion. Doing it at the right time, in the right place with the right people. Many did not approach it like that. Maybe Syd was one. He did not use it as a tool in his spiritual quest. Syd was not on the same quest as Stash and I. That questing was very serious. We read our alchemy looking for the answer, not casual. How do you get to higher consciousness? I had the feeling LSD could only take you so far before you came up against another door. And another level supporting that one. Stash, Jenny and John Tate and all that lot viewed acid as a quest for the Holy Grail of higher states. That was what it was all about.’

Once Barrett passed through the gates of dawn, he found they opened on a dark globe. When he turned around, the gates closed. He said, ‘I’d like to assimilate the system as it comes in, rather than see it as it goes out.’

The other side of being Piper to the Underground harkened back to another legend. Rather than a sylvan deity, benevolent and allied with nature, as in *The Wind in the Willows*, the Pied Piper of Hamelin led the children of the village to their deaths by drowning. A different incarnation of Pan was Puck, a mischievous nature spirit. This pagan trickster and half-tamed woodland sprite led folk astray with echoes and lights in night-time woodlands. The will-o’-the-wisps of East Anglian folklore were also said to bear lanterns flickering over marshes and fens that led travellers off course, often to their doom. If commercial success, pop-star fame, and mainstream popularity were a farce unbefitting a pure artist, being an acid figurehead and the Piper of the Freaks was far worse. The cautionary tale was: be careful what you invoke, you just might become it.

12. THUNDER WITHIN THE EARTH

'Thunder within the earth; the image of the Turning Point.
Thus, the kings of antiquity closed the passes at the time of solstice.
And the ruler did not travel through the provinces.'

I Ching: Book of Changes
Chapter 24: Fû/Return – The Turning Point
Richard Wilhelm, translator, 1950

'When, lo, as they reached the mountain's side,
A wondrous portal opened wide,
As if a cavern was suddenly hollowed.
The Piper advanced and the children followed,
When all were in to the very last,
The door in the mountain-side shut fast.'

The Pied Piper of Hamelin
Robert Browning, 1842

In the aftermath of the Olympia debacle, Roger Waters asked Nigel Lesmoir-Gordon to get hold of David Gilmour. Gilmour, back since September from France with Bullitt, watched Pink Floyd performances with a critical eye. 'Syd was thrashing about on his guitar terribly with everyone thinking it was wonderful,' recalled Gilmour. 'People were full of drugs. They went along with everything. A full hour of guitar feedback, no problem, they loved that. I loved the first album, but gigs were interminable, too anarchic. I considered myself a superior musician and thought I could knock them into some shape.'

On 6 January, David Gilmour quit driving a delivery van for Quorum in Chelsea and joined Pink Floyd. In the cold light of day, Syd was not contributing to the band, Gilmour needed work, and at that crucial time,

was able to fill in. Blackhill announced: ‘The Pink Floyd wish to explore new instruments and add further experimental dimensions to its sound.’ The expanded five-member group posed for photographs, though Barrett stood out from the pack, detached. With eyes fixed in the distance, arms crossed, Syd stood behind his bandmates, out of focus, and eclipsed.

Two days later, the quintet began rehearsals at a school hall in West London. Gilmour’s entrance into Pink Floyd proved a rude awakening. ‘We were teaching David numbers with the idea we were going to be a five-piece,’ explained Mason. ‘Syd came in with some new material. The song went, “Have you got it yet?” and he kept changing it so no one could learn it.’

‘A real act of mad genius,’ Roger Waters said. ‘The interesting thing was I did not suss it out at all. I stood there for about an hour while he was singing, “Have you got it yet?” trying to explain he was changing it all the time so I could not follow it. He would sing, “Have you got it yet?” and I would sing “No, no!”’

In what Mason called, ‘One final inspired demonstration of all his anger and frustration,’ ‘Have you got it yet?’ was Barrett’s closing contribution to the group he devoted so much to making and almost unmaking.

Barrett said of the split with Pink Floyd, ‘I don’t know that there was really much conflict, except that perhaps the way we started to play wasn’t as impressive, as full of impact as it might’ve been. I mean, it was done very well, rather than considerably exciting. One thinks of it all as a dream. It wasn’t really a war. I suppose it was really just a matter of being a little offhand about things. We didn’t feel there was one thing which was going to make the decision at the minute.’

Barrett’s erratic behaviour, petulance and mood swings exhausted his bandmates. His antic disposition worked all too well. He found himself at the receiving end of incomprehension, if not outright hostility. ‘Syd turned into a strange person,’ said Roger Waters. ‘Murder to live and work with. When still in the group in later stages, we got to the point where anyone of us was likely to tear his throat out at any minute because he was so impossible.’

‘We staggered on, thinking we couldn’t manage without Syd,’ recalled Mason. ‘We put up with what can only be described as a maniac. It

seemed his whole bent was on frustrating us. We reached a stage where all of us were getting depressed. A terrible mistake to go on trying to do it. He had become incapable of working in the group.'

When asked if he was difficult to work with, Barrett responded with an oblique, if astute answer. 'No, probably my own impatience is the only thing, because it has to be very easy. You can play guitar in your canteen, you know, your hair might be longer, but there's a lot more to playing than travelling around universities and things.'

On January 10, Pink Floyd returned to EMI for two days of sessions. Bereft of new material that made any sense, they set about salvaging older tracks for a new album. Roger Waters dubbed vocals onto 'Set the Controls for the Heart of the Sun', with Wright adding organ. Nick Mason added vocals to 'Scream Thy Last Scream'. The session sheets note just one guitarist, almost certainly David Gilmour. Syd was said to have sat in the reception at Abbey Road with his guitar but not attended the session.

When new motorways and an expanding university circuit would have brought considerable relief to the road-weary Barrett, it was too late. Pink Floyd now played through a proper eight-hundred-watt PA system designed for them by Charles Watkins, easing their live sound problems. The next day, Pink Floyd were on the M40 motorway to Birmingham to play their first gig with Gilmour.

Tom Marshall played in that night's support group Harmony Grass. 'Syd Barrett stood onstage staring at the audience and strumming his guitar loudly. In his own drug-induced world, playing a totally different song to the rest of the group. We tried to talk to him after their spot but he was away with the fairies! Such a waste, such a pity.'

'We did five gigs as a five-piece,' Gilmour said. 'My brief was to sing songs, play rhythm parts and let Syd play what he wanted. I'd have thought he did the embellishing while I was trying to hold it together. A difficult and strange time, with Syd and me turning up together to rehearsals, going out, and doing shows with five of us. I was learning and playing Syd's parts and singing Syd's songs while Syd was standing there, sometimes singing a little and sometimes playing a little; very odd.

‘It was fairly obvious I was brought in to take over from him, at least onstage. Impossible to gauge his feelings about it, I don’t think Syd had opinions as such.’

The five-man Floyd played on 13 January at the Winter Gardens in Weston-super-Mare, where coloured floodlights illuminated a waterfall as the Ken Birch Group played fifties dance tunes. On the fifteenth and sixteenth of January, they rehearsed new songs written by Waters, most likely without Barrett. Two days later, they returned to Abbey Road, where Norman Smith jammed with them on rhythm tracks, which formed the intro to ‘Let There Be More Light’.

‘Let There Be More Light’, was a new Waters-penned song that stemmed from a bass riff on ‘Interstellar Overdrive’. A division between light and dark, a bridge from Barrett’s era to the next, Pink Floyd were a tenable proposition once again; they would not have to return to the Poly.

On 19 January, Pink Floyd travelled to Sussex for two evening shows at Lewes Town Hall. The group employed Gilmour as rhythm guitarist, allowing Barrett to play what he liked. ‘Syd seemed to cheer up a little bit when I was there,’ observed Gilmour. ‘I guess it took some pressure off him. I learnt up parts like the record. Sometimes Syd sang a bit and sometimes he didn’t. It became obvious it wasn’t going to continue for long like that.

‘The first plan was I would join and make it a five-piece so Syd could still be strange but the group would still function. The next idea was Syd would stay home and do writing and be the Brian Wilson elusive character that didn’t perform with us. The third plan was he would do nothing at all. It quickly changed round; impossible to carry on working that way, so we ditched Syd, stopped picking him up for gigs.’

20 January saw Pink Floyd play the Victorian pier at Hastings overlooking the English Channel. Pete Drummond was that night’s compere. ‘On that occasion, I introduced them, although there was probably another group on as well, for whom I must have also done the honours. I brought along records to play between groups – Frank Zappa, Velvet Underground and Steve Miller Group.’

Hastings proved to be Barrett’s final performance with Pink Floyd. On 26 January, on the way to a gig at Southampton University with Tyrannosaurus Rex and the Incredible String Band, Syd was not picked

up; ending his tenure in the group. ‘Roger would go round and pick up everyone to go to the gig,’ recounted Gilmour. ‘He’d picked us up. Syd was the last one to pick up, in Richmond on the way out of London. Someone said, “Shall we pick up Syd?” Someone else said, “Oh, let’s not.” Inevitable.’

‘The five-man group idea wasn’t working out, but we couldn’t bring ourselves to tell him,’ Rick Wright explained. ‘I was living with Syd in Richmond, trying to take care of him. I had the horrible thing of having to say, “Syd, I’m just going to get some cigarettes,” because if I’d said, “We’re off to do a gig,” whatever state he was in, he would have come. I had to lie to him, go and do the gig. I came back and Syd said, “Have you got the cigarettes yet?” Four hours later; it was strange and I feel bad about that.’

Wright added to *Mojo*’s Robert Sandall: ‘Jenner and King thought Syd and I were musical brains of the group; that we should form a breakaway group to hold Syd together. I would have left with him like a shot if I had thought Syd could do it.’

With a *Top Gear* radio session days away and a long European tour ahead, Barrett was a liability. ‘No longer a viable proposition,’ John Marsh said, ‘he went in a fairly bloody coup. Personality problems and differences in the group meant Syd was elbowed out. All very tragic; one week he was playing and next it’s David Gilmour. Syd started on a long downward slide.’

‘Jenner and King felt, and with some justification, Syd was the talent they’d discovered and if we didn’t want to work with Syd, well, that was the way it would go,’ explained Mason. ‘This for most outsiders would have seemed a sensible decision.’

Peter Jenner said, ‘If you told me without Syd they were going to be the biggest working group in the world, with Syd I could’ve believed it, but without Syd where’s it going to come from? Nobody else could write well; Rick could do a bit of a tune. Roger could knock off a couple of words under pressure. [Waters] wrote only because Syd wrote and we encouraged everybody to. Rick wrote before Roger.’

Jenner and King wasted no time in setting to work on salvaging Barrett’s career. Max Steuer, producer of the film *The Committee* (a surreal curio, ostensibly about the battle between the establishment and

radicalised youth), sought out Pink Floyd to provide the soundtrack. Steuer, a professor at LSE during Jenner's tenure, kept in contact as Pink Floyd took off. A meeting between Steuer and Barrett went well. Syd agreed to provide the soundtrack and on 30 January they booked expensive studio time at Sound Techniques.

The scene of some of Barrett's finest work, the session got off to a poor start when he showed up an hour and a half late without a guitar or group. After a few frantic calls, some hired hands were assembled and a guitar borrowed. Steuer and Jenner returned a few hours later to find a trio of drums, bass, and guitar. Together, they ploughed through a twenty-minute instrumental, which Barrett insisted should be played backwards for the soundtrack. As they listened in dismay to the backwards jam, Syd thought the track a good start. The *Piper* sessions saw a fair bit of backwards tape, though Barrett's interest in turning things around was symptomatic of his tendency to opt for sonic reversal at every opportunity. Sound Techniques engineer John Wood telephoned Syd's lodgings to ask what tracks should be titled, if anything. The phone rang and rang. Barrett was gone.

So ended a difficult phase, six months that began with a frantic search for third single and ended with a twenty-minute backwards odyssey. It would be Barrett's last session for three months. Instead, Steuer turned to Pink Floyd, who delivered a perfunctory score with no fuss.

Although no one told him he was out of the band, ever intuitive, Syd took off in his Mini in pursuit. Tour schedule in hand, on 10 February he drove three hundred kilometres at breakneck speed to the Imperial Ballroom in Nelson. They found him sitting onstage holding his Telecaster. Waters recalled telling Syd not to take the stage with them. 'You could talk to Roger about all kinds of things,' observed Jenner. 'Roger realised as long as Syd was in the group they couldn't keep it together. The chaos factor was too great. Roger looked up to Syd and always felt guilty he'd blown out his mate.'

'I mean, we did split up, and there was a lot of trouble,' recalled Syd. 'I don't think the Pink Floyd had any trouble, but I had an awful scene, probably self-inflicted, having a Mini and going all over England and things.'

Racing back to London, he collected flatmate Matthew Scurfield. Together they drove to see the Who at Essex University in Colchester. Scurfield, in his memoir, *I Could Be Anyone*, recalled a terrifying ride, where Syd drove seventy kilometres at top speed, not stopping once for red lights. Scurfield had been doing some work with Pete Townshend, who was obsessed with playing *The Piper at the Gates of Dawn* on a specially made record player in his car. Keen to talk to Syd, Townshend invited the pair to the Who's gig, though by the time they arrived the Who had finished and left. Syd simply left Scurfield and split back to London.

Barrett continued driving his Mini throughout England that winter, destinations unknown. From vivid images scattered throughout his solo albums, Syd ended up at desolate seashores and bracken wastelands on the edges of darkest Albion.

On 17 February, Pink Floyd set off on a European tour and Syd was left to his own devices. The tour was an exercise in transition, to make the change to new singer-guitarist as smooth as possible. Few bothered to ask where Syd was. From here on, they were billed simply as 'Pink Floyd'. The definite article was Syd; he was written, and wrote, himself out. 'I hadn't a clue what I was doing, probably dreadful,' said Gilmour. 'Also excruciatingly embarrassing. I used to play mostly with my back to the audience.'

The group had reconvened at EMI to record 'Corporal Clegg' on 12 February – the first salvo of the new Pink Floyd. (Barrett confirmed, 'I was not featured on "Corporal Clegg".') Written by Waters, 'Corporal Clegg' approximated Barrett's songwriting style in a spurious rewrite of 'Scream Thy Last Scream', with a kazoo break culled from the BBC rendition of 'Jugband Blues', whose chords reappear beneath one of the verses. 'Corporal Clegg' tells of a shell-shocked soldier, and one can see parallel in Barrett's unravelling. Hasty plans were made to issue the song as a single.

Rick Wright recalled Pink Floyd struggling after Barrett's abrupt departure. 'We were amateurish, but I don't think just my stuff doesn't sound so good now. "Corporal Clegg", one of Roger's songs, was just as bad. Syd was the songwriter and we had to takeover songwriting, a lot of

responsibility to assume. We could never write like Syd. We never had the imagination to come out with lyrics he did.'

'I had no idea I would ever write songs,' admitted Waters. 'In the early years, I didn't have to because Syd was writing all the material. Only after he stopped writing the rest of us had to start trying to do it. I'd always been told, at school anyway, I was bloody hopeless at everything, so I had no real confidence about any of it.'

Roger Waters assumed the leadership with no challenge from the others, salvaging a ship about to be scuttled on the shores of psychedelia. Waters said, 'Straight after we split up with Syd, I simply took responsibility […] I started to write most of the material from then on. I'm perfectly happy being a leader.'

David Gilmour was confirmed as full member of the band. In his previous group, Bullitt, Gilmour played a white Telecaster with a rosewood neck, also using a Telecaster with a natural brown body. After Syd was ousted, he inherited Barrett's set-up: a Telecaster played through a Selmer Stereomaster hundred-watt head and a Selmer 2×12 All Purpose Speaker Cabinet, with a Binson wah pedal, Binson Buzz-Tone and Baby Binson. With fuzz box and wah pedals integral elements of Syd's own set-up, Gilmour brought his own Dallas Arbiter fuzz face and Vox wah pedals.

David used Syd's white Telecaster guitar between February and April as a backup for his own similar instrument. On David's first TV appearance with Pink Floyd for French show *Bouton Rouge* on February 20, Syd's Telecaster, identical to the main guitar, is seen leaning against David's amp. David borrowed Syd's guitar until Syd reclaimed the instrument later that spring.

In June, his new bandmates gave Gilmour a custom Fender Stratocaster, the most expensive guitar at Ken Stevens's shop. The sales staff who had chased him out as a teenager were astonished as he walked out with the prized instrument.

Gilmour's clean melodic lines and structured playing changed Pink Floyd's template, his musical structure dovetailing well with Waters's earthbound thematic concepts. Waters pulled Pink Floyd back from Syd's space whimsy to earthbound musings on everyday exigencies. 'My big fight in Pink Floyd was to try and drag it, kicking and screaming, back

from the whimsy Syd was into – as beautiful as it is – into my concerns, political and philosophical,' he asserted. 'Even now, people talk about "space". What the fuck is that? None of it had anything to do with that.'

Peter Jenner commented on the Gilmour slide and echo-guitar style: 'That's Syd! Onstage Syd played with slide and bunch on echo boxes.' Gilmour said, 'I was using an echo box years before Syd was. I also used slide. I also taught Syd quite a lot about guitar. People saying I pinched his style when our backgrounds are so similar is bound to get my back up. I don't want it to go into print saying I taught Syd Barrett everything he knows because it's patently untrue, but one or two things in Syd's style I know came from me.'

Barrett was first to realise full potential of the Binson echo unit and explored the echo side of the 'slide/echo' technique profoundly. Conversely, Gilmour was more adept at blues-based slide guitar, with a better-grounded orthodox sense of blues and R&B. A consummate musician's musician, Gilmour's sublime Fender slides aided Pink Floyd's leap from playing to three hundred at a ballroom in Leeds to stadium shows of eighty thousand.

The two were brilliant guitarists springing from the same parties and amateur gigs in Cambridge, when, aged sixteen, David and Syd sat around copying Rolling Stones and Shadows riffs. Respective styles, from near-identical origins, divided in opposite tangents. In the same way Barrett's pioneering *glissando* guitar continues to inform guitarists, Gilmour's epic solo in 'Time' is an understated piece of virtuosity. Syd's revolutionary chromatic improvisation was superseded by a return to tonal form.

'The group was an improvising group in the beginning,' explained Wright. 'Rubbish came out of it, but good too. That was to do with Syd, the way he worked. Things got a lot more structured when David joined. A fine guitarist, but he wasn't comfortable with wild psychedelic stuff.'

Gilmour disowned Pink Floyd's overt psychedelic impulse. His approach gravitated toward a sparse, fluid and clean tone, augmented by watery reverb with long pealing echoes, and minor pentatonic scales. Not to slight Gilmour's peerless skill, but his style was more technical and analytical than Syd's intuitive leaps and radical extrapolations. Gilmour was a brilliant musician, though not a radical innovator in the way Barrett

was. ‘David was much more of a straight blues guitarist than Syd, and very good,’ asserted Wright. ‘That changed the direction. Although he did try to reproduce Syd’s style live.’

The group recalled Gilmour’s incorporation with relief. ‘After Syd, David was the difference between light and dark, into form and shape. He introduced that into wilder numbers we’d created,’ Mason observed. ‘We became far less difficult to enjoy. That made it more fun to play because you want to entertain, get some rapport going rather than antagonise. To annoy the audience beyond all reason is not my idea of a good night out.’

Originally recorded in April 1968, a new version of ‘Nick’s Boogie’ morphed into ‘A Saucerful of Secrets’, the blueprint for Pink Floyd’s first significant post-Syd excursion. Though Syd’s distinctive D G E A chord sequence from ‘Arnold Layne’ floats beneath it, ‘A Saucerful of Secrets’ was structured using diagrams Waters and Mason drew, their irregular annotation surprising the more formally orientated Gilmour. ‘“Saucerful of Secrets” gave us a whole new framework which Syd hadn’t been a part of, which releases one from the spectre a little bit,’ he observed.

The notion of Syd as spectre was one the group rejected, though the ghost of such a primal force remained. Jenner noted, ‘The personality crisis in the old Floyd was Syd was an artist and the other three were student architects. That says an awful lot, particularly when you study music the Floyd went on to play.

Though the improvisatory ethic remained their main source of ideas in rehearsals or live performance, Pink Floyd’s studio recordings became more ordered and less spontaneous. Structure emerged as the key.

A remarkable ‘Interstellar Overdrive’ from April gigs in Rome, Italy showed Pink Floyd largely dispensing with the famed riff for lengthy muted explorations of the atmospheric midsection. A fan recalled Gilmour sitting behind amps for a cigarette while the other three pursued the free-form section in the middle before returning for the finale. Waters played clicking repeating notes below the bridge of his bass, adjusting the volume knobs. Though a different group, Pink Floyd traced the trails that Barrett left behind. ‘Interstellar Overdrive’ and ‘Astronomy Dominé’ remained in Pink Floyd’s live repertoire until mid-1970, the latter opening many shows.

‘Syd was a genius,’ declared Waters, ‘but I wouldn’t want to go back to playing “Interstellar Overdrive” for hours and hours.’ Barrett said, ‘When we parted I had written everything for the group. My leaving sort of evened things out within the group.’ The balance of power shifted to Waters and Gilmour; Waters providing concrete compositional thrust and Gilmour adding a musical quotient to the abstract framework.

On 2 March, Blackhill Enterprises, Pink Floyd and Syd convened for a final meeting at Edbrooke Road, which came down to Waters and Barrett talking together. Waters said, ‘I’d worked out what I thought was the only way we could carry on together, for him to still be a member of the group, still earn his fair share of money, but Syd not come to gigs at all. Become a Brian Wilson figure, write songs and come to recording sessions.

‘By the end of the afternoon I thought I’d convinced him it was a good idea and he’d agreed, but it didn’t mean much because he was likely to change his mind about anything totally in an hour. He went home and I went to see Peter and Andrew and said this was the end; if this didn’t work, we were off.’

Blackhill Enterprises, with Syd, parted ways with Pink Floyd.

‘Syd had a great plan to expand the group, get in two other geezers, some two freaks he’d met somewhere or other,’ Waters revealed. ‘One played banjo and the other played saxophone. We weren’t into that at all and [it was] obvious the crunch had finally come.’

‘Syd wanted to get in two sax-players and girl singer. To which we resolutely said, “No!”’ added Waters. ‘Peter and Andrew thought it couldn’t happen without Syd and stuck with him.’

Whether banjo and sax player, or sax player and female singers, there was a biting irony when Cambridge saxophonist Dick Parry and female backup singers Liza Strike, Lesley Duncan and Doris Troy provided Pink Floyd’s 1973 *The Dark Side of the Moon* with jazz and R&B overtones that injected warmth into a sometimes cold and technical template. In hindsight, Syd’s idea seems prescient. Soon, Barrett worked these ‘banjo and sax’ ideas into ‘Silas Lang’.

As his ousting sank in, Barrett became resentful. When Pink Floyd performed at Middle Earth on 18 March, Gilmour recalled, ‘Syd came

and stood in front of the stage. He stared at me all night long; horrible!' For Gilmour, dealing with the change in his old friend was as difficult as replacing him. 'I'd known Syd since I was fourteen. Hard dealing with replacing one of my close friends, and having to see one of my close friends no longer functioning as a normal human being.'

Pink Floyd narrowly missed a large-scale police raid, when one hundred and fifty officers stormed into Middle Earth on 3 March and spent five hours searching seven hundred and fifty people. With eleven arrests, police trundled off unfortunate freaks, telling Covent Garden fruit and flower vendors arriving for a day's work that 'hippies were crucifying babies'. Enraged vendors smashed up the venue with Jenny Fabian and Jeff Dexter barricaded inside the ticket booth.

In 1972's *Watch Out Kids*, Mick Farren wrote: 'One moment there is music, lightshows, dancing, everything normal. Then, suddenly, the group falls apart, house lights come on and hundreds are dropping pills and dope. Uniforms everywhere. The audience hastily segregated by sex and dividing screens erected. Everyone searched, swift frisking or order to strip; this depends totally on the individual cop's attitude. It is sad many pigs tend to adopt manners of Gestapo officers in B-feature war movies. If you're clean it's okay to leave, you are forced to leave, and even to go home, by police stationed in the street outside.'

As spring finally came around, there was a mood of anger amid the underground. Anger at police harassment and the British government's support of America's war in Vietnam. At an anti-Vietnam War demonstration on March 17, ten thousand marched on the US Embassy in Grosvenor Square. Excessive police force turned a restive crowd violent. Two hundred were arrested. 'The Grosvenor Square demonstration was contained even though it got way out of hand, but nothing compared to what was happening in France,' observes Peter Wynne-Willson. 'In the sixties, French police were an item to be reckoned with, more so than English police.'

Mick Jagger marched among the throng and was inspired to write 'Street Fighting Man', a militant rocker light years from the acid wanderings found on *Their Satanic Majesties Request*. As Brian Jones entered free-fall, the Rolling Stones, like Pink Floyd, set about stuffing psychedelia back into Pandora's Box.

Rick Wright and Juliette moved from the Richmond flat to new digs, while Syd and Lindsay remained. Jenner and King hoped Richmond would be far from the drugs and chaos of town. The management also felt that Lindsay was the best person to be around Syd since she had lived with him on and off for a couple of years. They hoped she could bring him around, but all of Lindsay's attempts failed to reach him. Friends Jock Findlay and Sue Kingsford remained close to Syd and Lindsay and often visited.

Some referred to them as 'Mad Jock and Mad Sue', though Duggie Fields maintains, 'Jock and Sue didn't strike me as madder than anyone else. I knew people who got committed. Jock and Sue wouldn't have been people I would have put up for commitment. They were fun in their way.'

One friend notes, 'Sue was different, extremely bright and vivacious with cutting-edge intelligence and wit. Extraordinarily beautiful with fine bone structure. She could hold a room, interesting and funny.' Despite what has been written elsewhere, Findlay and Kingsford never lived at Richmond, nor joined Syd on his madcap Mini tour chasing Pink Floyd around England.

Syd Barrett officially left Pink Floyd on 6 April. In May, with Pete Jenner as producer, Syd launched his solo career in earnest after the disastrous false start in January. Jenner transferred tapes recorded the previous October – 'In the Beechwoods', two takes of 'Vegetable Man' and a five-minute backing track called 'No Title', which Barrett might finish. However, when Syd entered Studio Three at Abbey Road, he did not give the old tracks a second thought, instead recording new instrumental backing material. 'I only did a couple of sessions,' recalled Jenner. 'Reasonably together in a fairly wacky way, at least there were songs.'

'Late Night' featured an impressive, swooping, wah-pedal-driven guitar and long sustained notes on the Mellotron and Lowrey organ. Downward slides alternated with shivering high *glissandi* as Syd made good use of Nashville twang on his Telecaster.

'Silas Lang' (better known as 'Swan Lee') developed on the banjo and sax ideas that contributed to his exit from Pink Floyd. Simple repeating rhythm-guitar motifs and bare melodic lines served as its structure.

Barrett played gossamer-thin leads, with an un-amplified Telecaster close miked with compression. This germinal version featured him strumming a driving rhythmic guitar backing, interspersed with richly melodic, jangling breaks. Piano, banjo and sax samples from a Mellotron organ created an aphasic skiffle shuffle. The Mellotron triggered tape samples of instruments from keyboard, with slight delay until the tape loops engaged. One had to anticipate the beat, which proved difficult for Syd.

The juxtaposition was clever, despite the performance being patchy, and showed Barrett's affection for trad jazz – which, in 1968, was as popular as arsenic – far out of step with the hard rock of Hendrix and the Stones.

'Swan Lee' saw Barrett looking back to Hank Marvin of the Shadows, whose treble- and echo-laden tone was influential to a generation of British guitarists. Trad jazz and the Shadows suggest Barrett was piecing together a post-psychedelic musical language by returning to his roots. With recurrent tremolo-guitar motif evoking Bo Diddley, a significant amount of work went into recording 'Swan Lee', with six sessions in 1968 alone.

Despite its episodic recording, 'Swan Lee' was solidly constructed. Barrett sang of paddling canoes, while his music mimicked lapping and paddling in onomato-melodic flourishes. There is no chorus, a single phrase closes each verse. Whether Barrett saw these as backing tracks, experiments or finished pieces, without his group the songs remained skeletal. What might have taken one session ended sprawling across several.

Engineer Peter Mew told Mark Paytress: 'These were booked as demo sessions to see if Syd had any songs worth recording. All a bit chaotic – do a bit, go off and have a smoke. Syd wasn't totally *compos mentis*. He wasn't temperamental, just not on the same planet as the rest of us. Many songs had potential and you thought, "If the guy pulls himself together, you've got something here."'

The sessions were not running smoothly. Engineer Ken Scott told Chris Moise: 'He was strange, absolutely. Weird, most certainly. Mentally unstable, I don't believe so.

'A session was held on a Saturday for which there was no information as to what we were doing. The second engineer and I got to the studio

probably at about 1:45-2:00pm for the 2:30pm start time. We waited and waited and at 5:30pm, the supposed end time of the afternoon session, as no one had arrived, we went to the pub for some food. Upon returning at 7:00pm, the official start time of the evening session, we were informed by the security guard that Syd had turned up and, as we weren't there, he left saying he'd be back later. We waited until 10:00pm, the official ending time, and as there was once again no sign of the main man we left, only to find out later that he had once again turned up after our departure.'

On 14 May, Barrett recorded a backing track for 'Golden Hair', which showed ample self-control, and created an evocative atmosphere. Using tone control and high gain, he made his guitar sound like cello or violin, augmented by scant wah pedal and the Binson. Adding cymbals, vibraphone, guitar and bass, Barrett displayed clear conception, building the song layer by layer. Sessions to overdub Mellotron, lead guitar and backwards drums saw Barrett compensating for the loss of his group by taking on all roles at once. There was paradox for Barrett: his predominant role in the Floyd meant that much weight rested on his weary shoulders. As a solo artist the weight remained. His discipline and drive had taken a beating. He struggled to link pieces together.

Barrett took a final stand at psychedelic improvisation, bringing in an unknown group to play vibraphone, percussion and bass. The line-up was more than likely drawn from Blackhill's roster, Tyrannosaurus Rex, Incredible String Band, Tomorrow, and Fairport Convention among them. (John 'Junior' Wood, bass player from Tomorrow, and Brian Davison, drummer from the Nice, affirmed to David Parker that they did not play on these sessions. Other possibilities include members of Simon Dupree and the Big Sound, Gentle Giant, Caravan, or the Deviants. Pink Floyd themselves could well have backed him.) Together, they tackled percussion-driven instrumentals 'Lanky (Parts One and Two)' and 'Rhamadan'. Tribal percussion had gained favour underground and the congas were almost certainly played by Tyrannosaurus Rex's Steve 'Peregrine' Took.

Took was part of the hardcore underground musician contingent that centred on Ladbroke Grove, which also included the Deviants, Hawkwind, and what became Pink Fairies. Using clattering percussion in

‘Sun Myth’ by Sun Ra as a template, Took and Syd played bongos, drums and congas, routed through EMI’s echo chamber. Engineer Peter Bown’s announcement on ‘Lanky (Part Two)’ was a weary, ‘Five minutes of drums!’ Producer Malcolm Jones later recalled that ‘“Rhamadan” lasted for almost twenty minutes, and in its unfinished state was also pretty boring. Syd too was not satisfied with it – he’d overdubbed several conga drums in random improvisation – and we agreed to abandon that.’

‘Lanky (Part One)’ was more successful, with the group achieving a fluid improvisation powered by a memorable, if loose, lead guitar. Alternating between lead and rhythm, Barrett played crunchy riffs that betrayed a strong Jimi Hendrix influence over a heavy Bo Diddley rhythm. Stinging sharp leads parried with busy walking bass lines, as Syd dipped between Jeff Beck rave-ups and licks from ‘Give Me a Break (Man)’.

‘Lanky’ and ‘Rhamadan’ were Syd’s last attempts to free music from standard forms, pure improvisation. The final recorded extension of UFO’s improvisatory ethos, ‘Lanky (Part One)’ fits better alongside space rockers such as Hawkwind than as a stand-alone piece.

From here on, Barrett jettisoned experimental improvisation for good. Abandoning free form, he returned to structured short songs for the rest of his career. His work with Pink Floyd delved into mysticism, science fiction and fairytales – evidence of his wide-ranging urge to explore. His solo albums switched to nostalgia, laments of lost love, and mapping his internal fragmentation. Barrett reached a crossroads. He stopped looking outward and turned his gaze in.

When Barrett returned to Abbey Road a week later to add overdubs to ‘Swan Lee’ and ‘Late Night’, he had no guitar at all, symbolic of his abdication as the king of psychedelic improvisation. Jenner paid for the rental of a guitar, with which Barrett gutted and then overdubbed the two tracks. The endless overdubs did not result in clarity, but rather more tangled groves for Barrett to become lost in.

To cement the end of his role as Piper of the Underground, Barrett traded his famed mirror-disc Esquire guitar for a nondescript black Fender Telecaster. He later ruefully noted, ‘I never felt so close to a guitar as that silver one with mirrors that I used onstage all the time. I swapped it for the black one, but I’ve never played it.’ Syd’s new guitar

was a 1962 double bound Custom Telecaster with a maple cap board, black solid alder body, white body binding and a solid, one-piece maple neck. Custom Telecasters only differed from standard Telecasters in having a bound body.

EMI noted the broken microphones and 'general disorder' of Syd's chaotic sessions with some displeasure. The equipment was partially damaged through carelessness, while Syd's style of overloading amplifiers and microphones also contributed to the carnage. Barrett's self-control was slipping. Recruiting Ladbroke Grove pickup groups did not augur well for success in the studio. Still, the very fact that Barrett opened his mouth and sang was testament to his renewed conviction. Not since 'Apples and Oranges', nine months before, had he recorded a vocal.

On 7 June, Jenner announced with an optimistic cry, 'This is "Clowns and Jugglers", *and it's take one!*' With take after wearying take, enthusiasm foundered. However, by the session's tail end, Syd's focus had improved a good deal. The song featured vocal, guitars and tambourine. He got rid of superfluous Mellotron overdubs, and brought 'Swan Lee' and 'Golden Hair' into soft focus, slipping into an intimate quiet voice backed by nimble strumming. Such restrained backing called to mind Dylan's low-key band on *John Wesley Harding*.

Jenner compared producing Syd to 'seeing a bus coming out of the fog, then immediately seeing it disappear back into the fog again'. Despite a few more overdubs, the sessions were abandoned. Waters recalled that there were 'four tracks in all, all of which were an elbow except for one. Peter gave up.'

At home, emotional security became paramount to Barrett. A gnawing fear that those on whom he depended upon for emotional support would prove unreliable ate into his relationship with Lindsay, his friends and flatmates. When Barrett felt unloved, his mistrust built and he lapsed into isolation. Songs on solo albums convey his unhappiness with his lover's dispassionate glances.

A friend of Syd's recalls, 'Lindsay was a slender pretty blonde, not engaged in underground culture. Rather a more decorative figure that did not have much to say, a pleasant young woman but without much going

on.' Others remember Lindsay as kindness itself, a woman with deep empathy and awareness, who struggled to keep Syd together. Syd's sister Rosemary pointed to the difference in outlook between her brother and Lindsay. 'Lindsay was a nice girl, but she liked smugging in the fashion world. There is so much falsity in that world it's terrible. He had no time for such things.' In the breakdown of his relationship with Lindsay, Syd lashed out physically.

Several songs on subsequent solo album *The Madcap Laughs* allude to Barrett sleeping in the hall or creeping into cupboards, while his lover lies in their room, beyond reproach. A gulf opened in their relationship, with Barrett taking offence at what he perceived to be Lindsay's airs, and her efforts at keeping up appearances with her fashionable friends.

'I didn't live with Lindsay and Syd [but] I don't remember their relationship being especially violent,' says Duggie Fields. Jenny Fabian observes, 'Syd and Lindsay were in a live-in relationship, so there would have been more problems and more personal sadness. I know there are stories he did go a bit funny and hit Lindsay and things. Everybody does something like that at some stage in his life, but I never saw anything except a gentle person. It wasn't that personal for me; something I saw and felt, but not somebody I lived with. I don't know [if] I'd want to talk about it had I lived with him. I'd have all those memories.'

Barrett is said to have locked Lindsay in their room, after a fierce argument ended with him shredding her King's Road finery. Though Corner denied it, Juliette Wright and June Child recalled rescuing Lindsay from the Richmond flat wrapped in an overcoat. When Peter Jenner heard June's angry account he was astonished. 'I couldn't believe it. I had this firm picture of Syd as this gentle guy, basically what he was.' Syd disposed of much of what he owned, giving away pop-star clothes, cats, records, books. He could not shed the skin of Syd the pop star fast enough.

A lifelong restless walker, Syd's wanderings through London were chaotic. He hung around the Holland Park Youth Hostel with sundry travellers and hippies from around the world. June Child said, 'I went through all Syd's acid breakdowns. He went to the youth hostel in Holland Park, climbed on the roof, got wrecked, and got spaced. He'd walk all the way to Shepherd's Bush where I was living. He came round

to my house at five in the morning covered in mud from Holland Park when he'd freaked out and the police chased him. I meant money, wages, and security to him.'

There were no wages as there were no gigs, and had not been for a while. Various people around Blackhill pitched in to ensure Barrett was looked after, fed and given a small retainer. Royalties from *The Piper at the Gates of Dawn* were only just starting to trickle through. Barrett had no discernible income.

Visiting June at Pennard Mansions, he avoided Roger Waters, who lived in the flat above. He lingered around the new Blackhill offices at Princedale Road, a block from Holland Park. He seemed perilously detached, sitting in silence for hours. Andrew King recalled to Cliff Jones: 'You'd occasionally see brief flashes of that wonderful imagination, that extremely pleasant lad who had written "See Emily Play" and "Arnold Layne". Trying to battle his way through the most enormous barrier to say two coherent words. He stopped trying, too difficult and painful for him. Terribly sad to see, none of us will ever forget what happened. Isolated beyond anyone's help, utterly alone.'

'After I left the group I just spent a year resting and getting the album together,' Barrett stated. 'I didn't do much else at all, some painting and thinking about getting a group together.' He sat in his room, listening to the just-released *The Beatles* (more commonly known as 'The White Album') by the Beatles, or Dylan's *John Wesley*, and sifting through the calamity of fame. After the sessions with Jenner foundered, Barrett did not return to the studio until April 1969.

John Watkins, Barrett's friend from the Cambridge Tech days, told Mark Sturdy: 'I met Gilmour at a festival and asked him how Syd was. He said, "He's all right," but there were problems. I didn't know what he meant, but he gave me Syd's number. I rang and asked him if he was interested in coming to Liverpool, since he'd left the Floyd, and doing some music. I couldn't have a conversation with him; he was gone. He'd gone somewhere else by that time and couldn't concentrate. He'd lost himself somewhere was the feeling I got. He couldn't find a way out and probably never did, very sad.'

Barrett struggled as Pink Floyd ploughed through efficient sessions for their second album. Parting on amicable terms, Blackhill Enterprises'

final gesture for the band was the organising of an epochal free concert on 29 June to mark the release of *A Saucerful of Secrets* – the first of two Hyde Park concerts Blackhill arranged with Pink Floyd's participation.

On the midsummer weekend, Pink Floyd played in the Cockpit at Hyde Park to thousands of fans on the grass and snaked around the Serpentine. John Peel declared the concert the best he'd ever attended. As Pink Floyd closed with 'Interstellar Overdrive', Barrett was adrift in another space altogether.

Traces of Syd remained on *A Saucerful of Secrets*. 'Set the Controls for the Heart of the Sun', features his echo-laden guitar sunk deep into the mix. On Rick Wright's 'Remember a Day', Barrett's mewling *glissando* shimmers like silvery threads of mercury. 'I did play on another track written by Richard Wright,' recalled Barrett. 'I forget the title but it had a steel guitar in the background.'

'Syd's on a tiny bit of "Set the Controls for the Heart of the Sun". I think I'm on "Set the Controls" as well,' confirmed Gilmour. 'I know Syd's on that, though I'm not sure what he's doing. I'm on it as well because I added stuff to it after I joined. I don't think I'm on "Remember a Day". Syd plays slide guitar on that. "Corporal Clegg" was started after I joined so he's not on that. I came in halfway through recording of the album and tracks like "Remember a Day" and "Jugband Blues" had been recorded earlier.' The album's sole songwriting contribution from Barrett was his poignant 'Jugband Blues', a fitting closer. Gilmour explained, 'We used "Jugband Blues" for no ulterior motive, a good song.'

Pink Floyd gigged hard around Europe and America, playing the usual smattering of ballrooms, student halls, and underground clubs. Their set-list comprised 'Let There Be More Light', 'Set the Controls', 'A Saucerful of Secrets' and occasionally 'Interstellar Overdrive'.

In New York, during July, they played on the tiny low ceiling stage at Steve Paul's the Scene and stayed at the notorious Chelsea Hotel, where former Warhol 'superstar' Edie Sedgwick tended to nod out in bed with lit cigarettes upstairs. Roger Waters tried LSD for the second and last time. 'I got stuck in the middle of the night on Eighth Avenue, trying to get something to eat, peering at the traffic lights. I thought I don't ever want to do this again, enough.'

When Nigel and Jenny Lesmoir-Gordon left for India in September, Syd and Lindsay moved into their room at Egerton Court. With its circular stairway, high ceilings and the grinding gears of an elevator, which rose through the centre, Egerton Court had an air of decaying grandeur. A six-storey building perched on Brompton Road, director Roman Polanski filmed parts of his 1965 horror film *Repulsion* there. In the same house, Barrett underwent a psychological collapse not unlike actress Catherine Deneuve's disintegration in Polanski's film.

Egerton Court became more like Cromwell Road by the day. Its location, across from South Kensington tube station, meant a constant stream of visitors. Days stretched into nights without apparent end. Emo Moore and Pip Carter could often be found there, the latter with a heroin habit in full swing. It was also visited by Mick Jagger and Marianne Faithfull, or Pete Townshend, with his girlfriend Karen Astley. LSD continued to be dealt from the flat, as it had been at Cromwell Road. 'We all embarked on an extremely acid-crazed period,' admits David Gale. 'We had this long thin flat; a long corridor with rooms to one side only. Nigel and Jenny lived in the end room. I lived in the room next to it, Po lived in the room next to that, Matthew Scurfield lived in the room next to that. Storm lived in the room next to that.'

Acid-crazed though the days were, a visual arts explosion swept through the house. Photographer Mick Rock lived upstairs with Roger Dean, who created intricate illustrations for groups such as Yes. David Gale says, 'Storm Thorgerson and I were at the same film school at the Royal College of Art throughout much of the time in South Kensington and Storm did the album cover for *A Saucerful of Secrets* using equipment from the photography school.'

Storm and Po cooked up a synthesis of René Magritte, Man Ray, Edward Hopper and forties photography that guided them through voluminous amounts of design work. Their first major commission was Pink Floyd's *A Saucerful of Secrets*.

Thinking of a name for their new company, Powell and Thorgerson found that someone had written 'Hipgnosis' on the flat door. They thought it an excellent choice. All at Egerton suspected Syd of writing the phrase, fusing words for loaded meaning, though it was actually visiting poet Adrian Haggard. Syd spent time making strange drawings of express

trains barrelling through skulls, or experimental tapes of clocks in washing machines.

‘Syd moved into Nigel and Jenny’s room, next to my room,’ recalls Gale. ‘Still a pop star, I remember rock chicks into tailoring coming round and taking orders for exotic rock’n’roll shirts for Syd. Made from bizarre upholstery fabrics and strange satin curtains, with gigantic collars, puffed sleeves, and ruffled fronts. Syd ordered these because he was a famous rock star.

‘Syd lived in this room with Lindsay and I often heard Syd tickling Lindsay because I had the next room. I thought it was harmless lovers’ play. Sometimes he tickled her mercilessly and she would scream for him to stop. On one occasion, I heard thumping sounds, as though he were banging her head on the floor, possibly. I don’t know what he was doing, but she was screaming. I thought, “Ah, a lover’s tiff.” Despite peace, love and community, it was in the same breath, uncool to interfere. Rather like the attitude the police take toward what they call a “domestic”.’

In spite of their reluctance to get involved, Syd’s flatmates found themselves separating Syd and Lindsay when fights escalated. Powell, Thorgerson, Matthew Scurfield and Emo Moore each pulled Barrett away from Lindsay. Scurfield received a head-butt from Syd. ‘His violence toward Lindsay didn’t seem in character at all,’ observes Wynne-Willson. ‘In Earlham, I recall going into the room once, and there being an atmosphere I didn’t recognise. When I heard reports of violence in Egerton, I was completely amazed. I’d never seen Syd demonstrate any violence whatsoever.’

Violence was new to Syd, who held malice to none. This was reflected in his final performances with Pink Floyd – abrasive, distorted, angry, and cynical. Barrett was popping Mandrax tablets to cope with his acid overload. A popular sleeping pill, Mandrax, or Methaqualone, was a central nervous system depressant in 250-milligram tablets, a sedative with nasty side effects. LSD was not known to induce violent outbreaks, though Mandrax was. In January 1968, Jimi Hendrix went on an uncharacteristically violent rampage in a Stockholm hotel room after a generous dose of Mandrax, resulting in his arrest. One user says, ‘A slight overdose made one hyperactive and try to fight sleep that came and

overpowered, but until then you floated.' Mandies were cheap and available on National Health prescriptions.

'As months passed, Syd's mood slowly changed,' Gale explains. 'It should be observed he was taking acid frequently. A small subgroup thought it was interesting to take acid daily. Most of us took it far less frequently. I stopped by then because I found it far too horrific. Everyone else was still swirling around doing it. Syd was one of the diehards who took it every day. He slowly became less jolly, more withdrawn, pale, bags under his eyes; he had trouble getting to sleep. He talked less, his sunny disposition eclipsed.

'He started to beat Lindsay up. He did strange things like push her into the toilet and squeeze the toilet door against her, trapping her between door and wall. He would punch her and was also becoming surly. Lindsay got locked in a classic battered partner syndrome, where all her friends would say, "You're crazy, all he does is beat you up and give you a hard time, he's crazy! Why don't you leave him?" and she couldn't. This went on and on. She lacked the capacity to leave an appalling situation. It wouldn't surprise me in the least if she is disturbed by those days.'

At Egerton, Syd was frustrated, tense and often withdrawn. The flat was overcrowded, with the Cambridge set living in confined quarters almost on top of one another. Most were on drugs, in psychotherapy, or getting religion. Knowing each other well and living in close quarters tended to amplify interpersonal issues. Peter Jenner credited Storm and Po with helping Syd. 'They knew him well and suffered with him going down, supportive, and tried to keep him with us.'

In careless abandon as his dark clouds gathered, Syd spiralled down the staircase at Egerton Court in a fog of dope and downers to the platform at South Kensington tube station as if in a dream. He wandered Ladbroke Grove, including Steve Took's notorious drug den at 100 Cambridge Gardens. Roaming South Kensington market or the Grove to score, he could not differentiate friends from parasites.

Barrett showed up in odd places. Rob Broughton of fellow Blackhill band the Edgar Broughton Group, said, 'When we first moved to London we lived in Colville Terrace not far from All Saints Hall. We jammed at Thursday sessions at All Saints Hall. Syd turned up and played my Strat.

Oddly, Syd, Peter Green and Eric Clapton played that Strat at various times. The Grove was full of lovely hippy girls, boys, and acid derelicts that were amusing to dangerous. It had its drawbacks back then, although most people seem to think it was a perfect decade. Wrong!'

Barrett's latent violence, aggravated by drugs and emotional problems, sprang forth. Syd's sudden aggression mirrored his frustration and fear. Removed from the safety and security of a stable home life, Syd had no space to paint, write or even think – trapped without a meaningful creative outlet. Surrounded by friends in drug-addled states, Barrett found that the line separating folly and good sense blurred. Residual anger at his ousting from Pink Floyd crept into his home life. His self-control slipped.

'It finally occurred to us something was wrong,' recalls Gale. 'We thought, "We must do something for Syd." We said, "Syd, we don't you think you ought to beat Lindsay up," and he took no notice at all. A parallel strand then was the "anti-psychiatric" school of R.D. Laing. *The Divided Self* was a hot read in our group. I had seen him talking at the Anti-University. I was deeply interested in psychoanalysis, and had gone to Laing to see if he could help me sort out my own head. I rang him and said, "Look, I live in the same house as Syd Barrett and we think he's in need of help, would you speak to him?" Laing said, "Well, only if he wants to be seen. There's no point in taking anyone to see an analyst if they don't want to go."

'Laing did say he would see Syd. I said, "Okay, we'll persuade him to see you, we'd better make an appointment, how about half past three next Tuesday or Wednesday? We'll put him in a taxi and send him over to you," and Laing said, "Okay, I'll expect him."

'We said to Syd, "Why don't you go see Laing, Syd, he could understand what you are into." Syd didn't want anything to do with it. We even booked a taxi. The driver came to the door in time to take him to Harley Street. Syd refused to get in it. As was his right, you could say. He refused, so we sent the taxi away. Syd never met Laing, but continued to be crazy.'

Syd's problems point to temporal lobe epilepsy, not schizophrenia. As bursts of generalised spike and wave discharges flashed across Syd's brain, aggression, sudden mood swings and impulsive behaviour

followed. Likewise, frequent ‘spaciness’, with recurrent *déjà vu, jamais vu* and depersonalisation. Syd would often seem not to be listening, daydreaming or otherwise preoccupied.

In the first phase, Syd would have felt intense fear without impaired consciousness or speech. Next, frequent prolonged fear, followed by long-lasting trancelike states with severe impaired consciousness. During transient sudden cessations of epileptic activity, Syd would return immediately to an apparently normal mental state.

Leading neurological expert Doctor Richard Restak comments, ‘Temporal lobe epilepsy also may be responsible for chronic rather than acute psychoses. While symptoms of schizophrenia may be encountered, paranoia was most common. Temporal lobe epilepsy patients can be distinguished from schizophrenic patients, when not acutely ill, by warm affect and good rapport.’

Syd had spells where he seemed perfectly fine – light, cheery and in good humour. His moods changed like the weather. Restless and chattering, he paced the flat. Minutes later, he became inactive, distancing himself from others, and sat in corners with zero social interaction. One hour later, the cycle would begin again. He would become hyper-defensive at perceived slights. Storm Thorgerson ruminated in *Mind Over Matter*: ‘Syd, lovely sad spooky soul-laden Syd.’

Apocryphal stories circulate of Syd having such bad acid trips that flatmates felt compelled to lock him in a linen cupboard, where he pounded on the walls. The truth was, he locked himself in the windowless, red-painted bathroom. Syd, all too aware of his lapses, experienced memory disturbances and the inability to grasp things with sufficient precision. Forgetting how to unlock the door, Syd would have a panic attack.

Storm told Nick Kent: ‘Syd was well into his “orbiting” phrase by then. Travelling fast in his own private sphere. I thought I could be a mediator. Syd’s madness was not caused by any linear progression of events, but more a circular haze of situations meshed on top of themselves and Syd. Me, I couldn’t handle those stares though!’

One by one, residents of Egerton Court fled the chaos, paranoia, drugs and violence – exacerbated by Barrett’s peculiar moods. Syd’s behaviour

left lingering ill will, as his friends lost respect for him. Lindsay left for Storm Thorgerson's new flat in Hampstead Heath and resisted many entreaties to return. Despite Syd's ringing the doorbell and lurking outside, reconciliation was not in the offing. Their relationship was over. The bitter twist was that a love first sparked when Barrett lay sick with glandular fever in Cambridge foundered as he got progressively more ill at Egerton Court. The same delicate hands that once wrote tremulous messages on transparent Honesty flower pods were now those that Barrett felt were hiding secrets from him.

Syd was devastated as Lindsay merged into Pink Floyd's camp. With Lindsay gone, Barrett wandered in and out of contact with reality. Acid swirled around as others in the flat enjoyed the dregs of psychedelia with wild times of their own. Haphazard stays at friends' flats followed, as Syd restlessly wandered London. By the end of 1968, he began hanging out with Duggie Fields, his flatmate from the Cromwell Road days. Fields was crashing on the floor of David Gilmour's flat in Bayswater. 'I had come back to London from visiting America with Gillian Staples, a girl whom Syd started going out with. Syd and I were hanging out and spent much time together.'

Fields finished his studies at the Chelsea College of Art and stumbled on his maximalist pop-art style when, on a whim, he painted Donald Duck into a more formal piece. Even at Cromwell Road, Fields had been level-headed, serious about painting, and sceptical of the Cambridge set's acid proselytising. Not given to excess – an oasis of calm in the eye of the storm – Duggie was always very together and managed to paint his way through the chaos around him. 'We had lived together at Cromwell, but mostly one was part of a group sitting around, or different groupings,' Fields recalls. 'We hadn't spent much time together before, just the two of us.'

Fields's quiet demeanour suited Barrett's introspective side. They got on well, and decided to find a flat together. Fields found a comfortable two-bedroom flat with large living room at Wetherby Mansions in Earl's Court Square, a tree-lined quadrangle of redbrick Victorian buildings with black latticework balconies. Though just around the corner from the busy Earl's Court Road, the square seemed idyllic.

Fleeing Egerton Court and sundry other flats where he crashed between all-night walks around London, Barrett at last had a home. His royalties having come through, Syd signed the lease and the pair moved in after Christmas 1968. Syd and Duggie each took a small bedroom. The flat was an unfurnished bare shell with white walls and stripped wooden floorboards. Barrett chose a room overlooking the square, with a one-bar electric fire built into a bricked-up fireplace and a bare light fixture. Syd brought a small end table, mattress and a blanket that he arranged on the floor.

Like consumptive poet Chatterton's garret, Barrett's new digs were every inch the true bohemian flat. Syd brought with him what few possessions had survived his moves around London over the past four years. Next to a beaten hi-fi with turntable and small speakers, he stacked scratched LPs with no sleeves, *Piper*, Beach Boys and blues albums. His black Telecaster, in its cracked flight case, was propped against one wall along with a small amplifier. He set an end table between bed and window, with a small typewriter, Penguin paperbacks of Chaucer and Shakespeare stuffed into open drawers, along with song sketches and lyrics.

Syd's remaining rock-star clothes were hung in an alcove. From Hills Road he brought a model aeroplane he'd made as a boy, and some balsa-wood dodecahedrons, which he hung from the ceiling. Barrett continued painting, though his interest was scattershot. He stacked large, half-finished works in the corner, with his brushes and paints in a tin, and drawings strewn in portfolios, a handful dating to Camberwell but most from the past year. He installed an orange bulb into the light fixture, hung Hessian green velvet curtains his mother had given him, pulled them shut, blocking the natural light, and locked his door.

Wetherby Mansions was Barrett's home base throughout the recording of his solo albums, *The Madcap Laughs* (1969) and *Barrett* (1970). The bare shell became his dark globe, where he lay, looking farther inside himself from further away. At length, Barrett wound his way through dirges like 'Opel' – farewells rather than fanfares. He created a world that was a document of the dark globe, conjured in his room at Wetherby Mansions, where if he opened blinds, the square's trimmed trees stood bare in winter.

Not all was doom and gloom, though. As spring rolled in, Syd brightened, sitting on his mattress with Gillian Staples and riffing on impromptu ditties like ‘Love You’, fragments dating from Cambridge and Earlham Road. Barrett sang somewhere between limpid English whimsy, the Goons, and blues.

Sometimes Syd was the Mad Cat and other times the Man on the Border, depending on what mood struck him. Fields recalled, ‘He wrote quite a bit then. He didn’t write regularly, he’d have bouts of writing. A pop star trying to make a comeback, in those clichéd terms.’ One friend insists, ‘That’s what he did. Songwriting was his job. He wrote songs and not all were about any one person or another. His songs were more often a jumble of ideas put together to serve his purpose.’

Barrett spent months developing a greater harmonic mastery of his acoustic guitar, Musician Josh Shamash comments, ‘Songs like “Feel” and “Opel” from his solo records showcase a far more developed ear for dreamy, Lennonesque harmonic twists.’ The chromatic drops on songs like ‘Long Gone’ demonstrated Syd’s careful correlation between mood and chords.

Barrett struck up a friendship with Welsh folk maverick Meic Stevens, dropping in at the latter’s sessions at Olympic Studios. Stevens, in turn, would visit Syd at his flat. Stevens recalled, ‘Syd would always sit on the floor; there was no furniture in his room, just bare wooden planks or ones painted orange or blue, a white phone, and a Fender Telecaster.

‘I was one of the few who got to go there; I believe he liked being on his own most of the time. Sometimes, he would play his Telecaster unamplified. Other times, he would stare through the window or into empty space. Syd didn’t seem to want much in life, just being on his own with his thoughts.’

Egerton Court was just a stone’s throw away. David Gilmour lived across from their flat at Richmond Mansions on the Old Brompton Road with Emo Moore. Wetherby, Richmond, and Egerton formed Syd’s axis. As in Cambridge before and after, Barrett often wandered within a narrow desultory orbit.

‘You could almost see David Gilmour’s flat from our window,’ explains Fields. ‘Syd and David still saw each other. I can’t remember Syd articulating any resentment toward David for replacing him in the

group. Syd's two solo albums would never have happened without David. David must have made a great effort to get those together. David's flatmate, Emo, would come around and visit quite a lot. We would go over to visit regularly, sometimes several times a week. Jerry Shirley [drummer for Humble Pie and on Syd's solo work] lived right down the road. There were always people visiting here too.'

Though Fields found Barrett functional, sometimes social and charming, his behaviour could also be disturbing. 'We were going around to see David Gilmour. Gilly, lying on Syd's bed, didn't want to come. He didn't want to leave her in his bed for whatever reason, so he picked her up and threw her across the room. I'm sure I said something to him, but nowadays I wouldn't allow someone to do that, no matter whom.'

The paintings Syd worked on were bold black outlines on white canvas. Dark castles and pools of paint thrown on with brush, or black Zen bolts and scarified cartoons, paint running down the canvas and drying in puddles below. A portrait of a woman hung over the sealed Victorian fireplace, unfinished. A quick glance shows a still life, a closer look suggests threatening tangled lines. An unsteady balance was struck between abstraction and representation. Like many of his songs, paintings were unfinished or abandoned.

Asked whether he still painted, Barrett joked, 'Not much, the guy who lives next door to me paints. He's doing it well. I don't really feel the need. A lot of people want to make films and do photography and things, but I'm quite happy doing what I'm doing.'

Like other underground luminaries, Barrett painted himself into a literal and metaphorical corner. Lying in bed one morning, he stared at his blanket's orange and blue stripes and had a flashback to Gustave Caillebotte's 1875 painting *The Wood Floor Planers*, which depicted workers scraping the wood floors of a sunlit room in striated patterns. Inspired, with Storm Thorgerson's garish orange and red room at Egerton fresh in his mind, he got up, pushed his few belongings into a corner, and sauntered off to fetch paint from the Earl's Court Road.

Working at a fast pace, he did not bother sweeping the floor. Fag ends, lint and hair were brushed into floorboards in parallel orange and blue stripes. Retaining some measure of surefootedness, he darted between lines as one set dried. Complementary colours, called 'flashing colours'

in *The Golden Dawn*, orange and blue represented the element of water. Inspired by pop art or mysticism, his room possessed a disquieting intensity.

With a home base and a measure of security, Barrett's nine-month-long 'lost weekend' was at an end. Jenny Spires and close friend Catriona 'Trina' Barclay stayed with Syd and Duggie between Christmas and March before travelling to America. Jenny and Trina were at Lucie Clayton Modelling Agency together, and Syd had hung out with the pair when they would pop around the corner to 101 Cromwell two years before.

'The floor was already painted blue and orange and I remember thinking how good it looked on *The Madcap Laughs* album cover on my return from the States, when the album was released,' recalls Jenny, who had not seen much of Syd since summer of 1968, when she left for Scotland. 'Syd was very alarmed by my going to the States and begged me not to. He even suggested we get married. As soon as he'd said it, and probably because of the look of dismay on my face, we fell about giggling. He was being protective.'

Trina's sister, Margaretta or 'Gretta', sometimes visited with her boyfriend Rusty Burnhill. The pair were art students, and liked going to the pub for drinks, which the others did not. Rusty adored Syd and they got on well. Rusty also played guitar and he and Syd jammed and spent a lot of time laughing. Syd had cleaned up considerably – none of them, including Barrett, were doing acid. They smoked a bit of dope and that was all – no uppers, no downers, no Mandrax.

Margaretta Barclay told Felix Atagong, 'Syd was a vulnerable person, we cared for him and our aim was to encourage him to be creative, to write and play his guitar. Rusty only wanted to write and play music with Syd, to give him drugs was not on our agenda – Syd was "far out" enough without them.'

According to Barclay's account, Rusty and Syd enjoyed playing together and worked on Syd's new songs 'Terrapin' and 'Octopus', as well as songs they created around basic blues scales.

Syd traded his blue Mini for an absurd American Pontiac convertible, a mammoth car ill-suited to London's roads. Fields says, 'This only happened once, but little things like Syd getting in a car and driving the

wrong way up Earl's Court Road, which has always been one-way. Syd had a Mini when he moved in. We would drive places. Syd could drive. I wasn't paranoid getting in the car with him. He swapped his Mini for Mickey Finn of T. Rex's bright pink Pontiac Parisienne push-button convertible, which Mickey won in a raffle. London isn't built for big American cars.

'We looked conspicuous, the way we dressed. Not good for paranoia, when we drove around everyone would look. We were usually stoned, someone usually carrying drugs. The police stopped me many times in those days for drugs. The Pontiac made one paranoid, so I was never happy being in it, despite it being a wonderful car. Then I heard Syd swapped his Mini for it. There it was, sitting outside the flat. Syd couldn't drive it. He couldn't get it to work. It sat for months decaying, this enormous pink Pontiac. The police left a notice saying they would tow it away as an abandoned car if it weren't removed. Syd gave it away to someone he stopped in the street.'

Evelyn, a woman nicknamed 'Iggy the Eskimo', was another unusual character who orbited around Syd. Jenny took Iggy to Wetherby Mansions and introduced them in January. Iggy was well known on the scene and it was likely that Syd had come across her before as she'd been around all the same venues; UFO, the Speakeasy, Roundhouse, and Alexandra Palace. Iggy had nowhere to live, so she stayed on, but wasn't there for long and moved around a lot.

Iggy, a South Londoner whose mother hailed from the Himalayas, had sprung from the mod scene at the Orchid Ballroom in Purley. Iggy's real name was Evelyn, and she commented decades later, 'Syd was so beautiful-looking. We had a relationship, I lived with him for a while.'

Iggy had achieved a degree of notoriety, appearing in a newsreel shot at Granny Takes a Trip and in *Melody Maker*, demonstrating a new dance. She was given to popping Mandrax, putting on a forties gown without knickers, and waltzing out onto the Earl's Court Road. A free spirit who made a brief appearance in Syd's life, Iggy eventually moved on down the King's Road to religion, high society and eventual marriage, apparently to a financier.

Anthony Stern made a short film of Iggy pirouetting in a London park, where she displayed a curious sinister playfulness, not unlike Syd.

‘Iggy was terrific fun to be with and to photograph,’ recalled Stern. ‘I knew her before she was introduced to Syd by Jenny Spires. I remember walking through Battersea Park in the early mornings together. I made a short film of her dancing in Russell Square, the ultimate flower-child.’ Stern photographed Iggy on a houseboat at Chelsea Reach, with Lots Road Power Station towering behind. Emo insists that Iggy was gay and never slept with men. If she stayed with Syd in the same bed, that did not mean they were having sex. Syd was not overly sexual, having other matters to contend with.

‘I met Iggy in spring 1967, so I’d known her a couple of years, since the time I met her in [fashion store] Biba,’ Jenny Spires explains. ‘She admired a dress I was wearing and invited me to a party that night. We went clubbing. A lovely, sweet, funny girl, always on the scene at gigs and events. Iggy was quite a lot older and had been around a while on the London club scene. She did cross over with time though, and started hanging out at Granny’s and turning up at UFO with the rest of us. I took her to Wetherby Mansions in January. Iggy stayed on at the flat with Syd and Duggie. Iggy happened to be there when Mick Rock’s photo shoot came about, great because we have such a good record of her. A lovely girl, Iggy was quite a lot older than us – I was nineteen, Syd was twenty-two, and she was about twenty-four or twenty-five.’

On 27 March, Barrett went to the 100 Club on Oxford Street to see Soft Machine play. In the two years since they’d shared bills with Pink Floyd at UFO, Soft Machine had developed into a seasoned group. A tour of America with the Jimi Hendrix Experience made them much tighter musicians. The downside was that they lost Daevid Allen and Kevin Ayers, whose surreal humour and languid whimsy was lacking as Soft Machine progressed into jazz-rock fusion.

Ayers chose to go solo after a final gig at the Hollywood Bowl. Had Barrett left Pink Floyd after their first American tour, he might well have become a similar kind of itinerant troubadour, recording and performing as it suited him, issuing a string of classic albums on Harvest with musician friends lending a hand.

Allen remained in France after his expulsion from the UK and formed the magnificent Gong. He said, ‘I saw Syd Barrett playing a slide guitar that created a sound like an orchestra. I thought it was fantastic! I got a

guitar and some gynaecological surgical instruments and I applied them to the guitar. I wanted to get a sound like a violin. I added a little bit of reverb or echo and I came to the sound of *glissando* guitar.'

Gong guitarist Steve Hillage said, 'Syd Barrett was a major influence. I saw an early Pink Floyd concert before they were famous and that influenced me a lot. Founder of *glissando* guitar, Syd did it with a Zippo cigarette lighter. He showed that to Daevid Allen and Daevid took that sound and made it a trademark sound of Gong. When I joined Gong, Daevid and I became the *Glissando* Brothers. I've carried on in that mode ever since.' A direct remaining link to Syd, his guitar style and quasi-mystical approach, tempered with a strong dose of humour, lived on in Gong, long after Pink Floyd had decamped to American stadiums.

That night at the 100 Club saw Soft Machine as a taut trio comprised of Hugh Hopper (bass), Robert Wyatt (drums) and Mike Ratledge (organ). Soft Machine gave Syd a sizeable creative jolt, such that he felt compelled to record again. After the gig, Barrett ambled up to the group on a deserted Oxford Street as they packed their gear into van. Hopper recalled Syd saying, 'I'm doing a record at Abbey Road, do you want to come and play on the record?'

'I didn't know Syd at all, that session came about because we were playing at the 100 Club,' confirmed Wyatt. 'Syd happened to come along and see the gig. In his very, very oblique way said, "Would you like to come along and record?"'

They agreed, and the next day Barrett rang EMI's studio booking office to schedule a session. The request was referred to Malcolm Jones, twenty-four-year-old head of Harvest, EMI's new alternative label. Home to Pink Floyd, Pete Brown's Piblokto, Roy Harper and Deep Purple, Harvest put out a succession of offbeat music, which ran the gamut from wobbly prog, to spaced-out folk, to outright hard rock as the underground turned progressive. Jones was a fan of Syd's work and proved understanding and helpful. His privately published account, *The Making of 'The Madcap Laughs'*, is an invaluable study of Barrett's creative process.

Jones wrote: 'It occurred to me on several occasions to ask what had become of Syd's own solo career. Dark references made to "broken microphones in the studios and general disorder" by EMI management

resulted in a period when, if not banned, Syd's presence at Abbey Road was not encouraged. None of Jenner's recordings turned out releasable. No one in EMI's A&R department had gone out of his way to encourage Syd back.'

Jones wasted no time and rang Syd back the next day. Barrett was hungry to record a backlog of old and new songs that would subsequently grace his first solo album, *The Madcap Laughs*. Some were written as far back as Cambridge, others after his departure from Pink Floyd.

Set to a 1907 poem by James Joyce, 'Golden Hair' dated from when Syd first experimented with setting poetry to music. Several songs were written as he rocketed through the cannabis idyll at Earlham Street in 1966.

'Here I Go' showed Syd's music-hall sensibility, with echoes of English comic songwriter George Formby. The clever poetic meter of 'Octopus', one of Barrett's best-loved songs, was a high watermark. The songs written since Syd's ousting from Pink Floyd illustrated what Thorgerson called 'someone travelling very fast in his own sphere'.

As Barrett dealt with the break-up with Lindsay and his sudden exit from the band, he used potent imagery to sketch a broken heart with trembling vocals that cracked if sung too loud. Though Barrett drifted from woman to woman, he would not, or could not, form a lasting relationship. In large part, his songwriting shifted to explore his internal dilemmas. The vagaries of failed romance intersected with flashing pop whimsy. Personal tone and first-person narrative gave his songs a profound human feel, and enduring appeal. There was no psychedelic artifice as Barrett re-established his identity as a person rather than a rock star. Interstellar space and Asian mysticism were abandoned for internal dialogues rife with regret. There is a mournful tone as Barrett laments lost loves and increasingly fraught mental tangles.

His nostalgia is often for events of two or three years before, though after all the tumult they must have felt like a lifetime. At twenty-three, Barrett was already looking back. No longer innocent, he catalogued his experiences. Some bitter, all were true to life. With not a hint of self-pity, a lack of adornment strips the songs to an open core. His jaunts with Pink Floyd across Europe and America brought back vivid images in his new songs. Acoustic songs that mine black hills, quarries, dark globes and

broken piers round out *The Madcap Laughs*. His landscapes are extremities – borderlines, seashores, and quarries – that parallel Barrett's internal topography.

'Syd was in good shape when he made *The Madcap Laughs*,' stated Peter Jenner. 'Still writing good songs, probably in the same state as during "Jugband Blues".' If 'Jugband Blues' was the portrait of nervous breakdown, as Jenner stated, then the twelve songs on *The Madcap Laughs* explore that breakdown in fine strokes. The album documents Syd with one foot on the ground, and another in a world of his own. Barrett's lyrics were at times abstract to the point of obfuscation, though when they threatened to fade into incoherence he would do an about-face and surprise the listener with searing clarity. Sifting through strata, Barrett catalogued pieces of his shattered world. Amid distorted perceptions, and disorganised thoughts, he gathered fragments, building an intricate mosaic with trembling hands.

Listening to these sessions in chronological order reveals a different picture than myth would have us believe. Whatever his difficulties, Syd worked doggedly to bring his songs to life. He tries them in different keys, tempos, pitching his voice up or down to see what works best. This being Syd Barrett, not all is despair, far from it; there is a profusion of seductive melodies and bright moods.

Among the thirty-five or so songs Barrett recorded, the familiar old Syd re-appeared in intermittent flashes, illuminating tracks with transcendent beauty. His two solo albums and accompanying outtakes are every bit as essential as *The Piper at the Gates of Dawn*, brilliant and erratic by turns. *The Madcap Laughs* and its successor Barrett disturb and amaze in equal measure, love or hate propositions for most. Derided as rubbish ('musically, they're atrocious', complained Rick Wright) or lauded as brilliant ('all the songs on the album are great', raved Waters) Syd's solo songs are diamonds in a wasteland that once was Eden. For every bright gleam, a sepulchral darkness nips at its edges. For every fallow field, a gemstone glitters in the dust.

The Madcap Laughs is Barrett's search for the tonal centre he'd lost with all his chromatic improvisations. He navigates chord changes with difficulty, though sheer determination. The inner realm Barrett sought to

map had the paradoxical effect of being pinpoint precise in descriptions of a world too vague to see.

Loosening associations that first peeked their ungodly head on ‘Scream’ and ‘Vegetable Man’ turned into a new poetic language on *The Madcap Laughs*. Barrett struck an unsteady balance between lyrical poetry and mumblings of madness with surprising results. His work displays radical re-workings of established poetic forms and his lyrical sensibility mirrors the English fascination with words and language, fitting for a country with so many diverse dialects and accents. The vitality of Syd’s lyrics stems from a deep recall of the point where a child first learns to articulate abstract ideas and cross-lateralise thoughts. Familiar and fresh, the refined complexities that comprise poetics are obvious. ‘His solo stuff was for me some of the most emotionally touching and psychologically observant writing ever in the music world,’ asserted Daevid Allen.

In *Science and Sanity*, Alfred Korzybski noted: ‘Language constitutes the basic tool of time binding.’ As Barrett’s ability to spin words decreased, so did his capacity to keep good time on guitar. That these albums exist was testament to Barrett’s struggles as he pulled himself apart. Concerted efforts from producers and engineers ensured that anything was committed to tape. Refusing to give in, Barrett looked at his breakdown objectively. He analysed, studied, and reported. Precious few documents show what losing your reason feels like. In interior monologue, Syd sings of his flight into – and out of – darkness. Tracing the fallout of the underground, Syd sings of his own fitful return.

Other albums took an abrupt turn from the blighted pastures of psychedelia down dark paths into the woods. Skip Spence of American psych-rock group Moby Grape created a similarly riveting LP, *Oar*, after his departure from the group. To use Barrett’s phrase, these albums were ‘heavily spaced’, a paradoxical image, which illustrates compounded weightlessness at the heels of acid burnout. Fall-out from the acid-drenched psychedelic heyday; a lament for a promise lost, and driven to dust.

If *The Piper at the Gates of Dawn* suggested lysergic spring and flaming summer, then solo Barrett albums mark the break of autumn back to winter. If, as Barrett blithely insisted on ‘Jugband Blues’, he

didn't care if the sun didn't shine, here he feels enveloped in twilight, waiting for the dawn, but time stands still.

Returning to basics, Barrett jettisoned the psychedelic improvisations that he employed with blazing brilliance with Pink Floyd. The wild swell of the Binson is gone, with effects stripped back to minimal reverb and echo. He used an un-amplified Telecaster held close to a live mike to lay down skeletal rhythm tracks, over which spidery-thin leads skate like ghosts duelling with thin wires.

Engineers on the album sessions often held microphones up to his guitar, as Barrett moved about. From the difficulty of recording Syd, or having others record with him, many tracks have an appealing dryness, stressing the bare vocals and guitar, with spare accompaniment.

Even as Syd struggles for the right note, tone, feel, riff or lyric, his singular talent is in evidence throughout, with a wealth of lyrical and musical twists that draw successive generations in. *The Madcap Laughs* is a song cycle about love lost, regained and then lost again. Eight of the twelve songs deal with love – love blooming, love deteriorating, and love gone. This, then, is music for long dark nights of the soul.

Malcolm Jones checked with his superiors and the sessions began. Anxious to avoid any further disorder, the brass at EMI insisted that Barrett had a competent producer to direct him. Jones approached Norman Smith and Peter Jenner to produce the album, though they turned him down. Later, Jones realised that Joe Boyd might have been a good choice. Syd's response was unambiguous. 'You do it'.

Jones found Barrett coherent, and suspected rather more had been made of his eccentricity than was warranted. He walked over to Syd's flat to hear the Jenner session tapes. 'What I saw gave me quite a start. In anticipation of the photographic session for the sleeve, Syd had painted bare floorboards of his room orange and purple. Until then the floor was bare, with Syd's few possessions mostly on the floor – hi-fi, guitar, cushions, books and paintings. The room was much as appears on the original *Madcap* sleeve. Syd was well pleased with his day's work and I must say it made a fine setting for the session to take place.'

Barrett played rough mixes of 'Silas Lang', 'Rhamadan', 'Lanky (Parts One and Two)', 'Golden Hair' and 'Late Night'. All were

instrumentals, bar one. There was no mention of any Pink Floyd-era work to finish. Neither Syd nor Jones was enthused with 'Rhamadan', while Barrett was keen to finish 'Golden Hair'. They agreed that 'Late Night' was to be remade. Syd pulled out his acoustic guitar and outlined some new songs. Jones's favourite was 'Opal' (misspelled 'Opel' by a studio engineer), in a dirge-like waltz tempo. 'An extremely haunting song, stark and poignant,' observed Jones.

'Clowns and Jugglers' met with similar approval. Syd also played a few bars of 'Terrapin', which he was still working on. Although 'Love You' did not take Jones's fancy, he recalled, 'Syd was pretty keen on it, largely because it was up-tempo.' Impressed, Jones wrote: 'It all sounded too good for words! I left Syd's flat totally elated, determined next day to book studio time immediately and to get started.'

At the end of March, Syd and Mick Rock dropped acid two weeks before the album cover photo session. They had a good laugh and a good trip. Rock wrote in *Psychedelic Renegades*: 'Syd liked to laugh. Sometimes he laughed at a shared joke or insight. Sometimes he laughed just for the hell of it. But, believe me, this madcap liked to laugh. Most people have an image of Syd as a dark, brooding, secretive and inarticulate prince of psychedelia gone haywire. And that probably is a legitimate part of this curious tale, but it is only part of it.'

At times, Syd could be charming and lively. He spent time skylarking in Holland Park with Rock, where the photographer shot sixteen-millimetre footage Syd scampering in his psychedelic finery with Iggy and an unknown brunette. Barrett seems perfectly happy, darting about, climbing trees and blowing bubbles, dressed in brilliant psychedelic boutique clothes from Alkasura.

Mick Rock credited LSD for opening his creative vistas, and inspiring him to pick up a camera. 'Syd was one of my first subjects. I co-owned a windup sixteen-millimetre Bolex with two friends. I shot in [Egerton] which Syd and I shared with several other artists in the winter of '68. By then Syd left Pink Floyd.'

In April, Storm Thorgerson supervised the photo session for the cover of *The Madcap Laughs*, bringing in Mick Rock to photograph at Syd's flat. 'Syd just called out of the blue and said he needed an album cover,' confirmed Rock. When Thorgerson and Rock arrived for the shoot, 'Syd

was still in his Y-fronts when he opened the door,' Mick explained. 'He had totally forgotten about the session and fell about laughing. His lady friend of two weeks, "Iggy the Eskimo", was naked in the kitchen preparing coffee. She didn't mind either. They laughed a lot, a magical session.'

Without prompting, Iggy joined Syd for the photo sessions, creating a pleasant counterpoint to the stark room. Rock fitted his Pentax camera with twenty-eight-millimetre wide-angle lens; giving an illusion of greater size. The room had a claustrophobic feel, like the Powis Square basement flat in the film *Performance*. Barrett was all smiles, eyes bright, in good humour as the late afternoon sun streamed in through open windows. Rock recalled, 'The first pictures were done using just light from the window. Later, as light faded, I set up basic photoflood lights, but that was all we used. Long exposures from low light and push-developed, more time in processing fluid. Colour changes, film starts to break up, causing grainy effect.'

The photograph chosen for the album cover was a dark grained shot of Syd crouching gingerly in the orange and blue room. The photos captured Barrett's image for the ages – a shadowy figure out of time and place in this world, though powerful and spectral in another. A creature at the fringe of dream and reality, Syd appeared a total mystery inside a crepuscular world of his own.

As Rock photographed Syd and Iggy on the paving stones outside, Pink Floyd road manager Alan Styles happened to stroll up. Syd chatted with his old Cambridge friend, who ran the punt dock across from the Anchor Pub. Syd then lay across the bonnet of his broken Pontiac Parisienne, hands jammed into his velvet coat pockets, staring far off toward Cambridge, his car coated in dust with flat tyres – mirroring the creeping decay at the borders of Syd's world.

The first session at Studio Three, where almost all of *The Madcap Laughs* was recorded, commenced on 10 April. The intimate atmosphere where he made *Piper* was perfect for conjuring his dark globe. Jones and Barrett overdubbed guitar and vocal tracks onto 'Swan Lee' and sounded out ideas for 'Clowns and Jugglers'. Neither version was used, though the session served to reacclimatise Syd to the studio after nine months'

absence. Barrett relaxed with Jones, whose empathy was comforting. When the mood was right, in a relaxed environment, Syd shone, working with dedication and focus.

The following day, Barrett arrived ready for the single most intensive day's work in his career. Jones wrote: 'Syd was in a great mood and in fine form, stark contrast to rumours and stories I'd been fed with. In little over five hours we laid down vocal and guitar tracks for four new songs and two old.'

With engineer Peter Mew and Jones at the desk, Barrett sat on a stool with his guitar, arranged lyric sheets on a stand, and played 'Opel'. Jones and Barrett spent much time trying to get tempo and vocal just right. Nine attempts at 'Opel' produced two complete takes. Even these were not perfect. Jones noted, '"Opel" had stark attraction. Most early takes were merely false starts.'

Unreleased for almost twenty years, 'Opel' is a long dirge with Barrett singing over constant chord changes and semi-tone falls in convoluted farewell. The song began with a reversed chord progression from 'Arnold Layne' (A E G D) – a recurrent motif in Syd's songs. Despite a sinuous cavalcade of chords with complex changes, in 'Opel' Syd is trying, finding and giving all at once. Using a passage in Homer's *Odyssey* which begins, 'Have hither come from a far distant shore' as a springboard, Syd opens with a stark image of a far-off shoreline. In a penumbra of desolate renderings, his phrasing balances on the backbeat in a talking cadence, as his landscape resonates with visions of the fall.

The newly finished 'Terrapin' was recorded in one take. Inspired, Syd overdubbed chorus vocal and atmospheric guitar. The album's opening track, 'Terrapin' beguiles with oblique poetic lyrics contrasted by languid delivery, which wavers metrically despite the standard 4/4 time signature. The song took its title from Terrapin Road in Balham, South West London, where Syd's sister Rosemary lived. Syd describes a sluggish terrapin's trawl around a seashore scene straight from Edward Lear ('*All the fish in the world swam around/With a splashing squashy spluttering sound*'). He weaves lyrical lines with contrasting images one into the other. Using half-lines of Anglo-Saxon poetry, defined by strategic breaks or pauses, the overlapping illustrates Barrett's shifting, condensed poetic meter.

Barrett colours ‘Terrapin’ from one tangent to the next, with his non-linear logic laid out for all to hear. Syd does not tell you that he’s swimming in the ocean, but within his word choices lays a disassembled language of pure sensation.

On a *Melody Maker* ‘blind date’ interview Roger Waters said, ‘“Terrapin” makes everything else you have played me look sick and silly. I think this is beautiful. Don’t take it off; I’m going to listen to it all the way through. I think that is a great song. All the songs on the album are great. No, some of them are GREAT, in capital letters. All of them are good. Syd is a genius.’ Barrett was, in Waters’s opinion, ‘One of the three best songwriters in the world.’

If ‘Terrapin’, halfway between idyll and torpor, illustrates Barrett’s lost weekend, then the static paranoia of ‘No Good Trying’ alarms and fascinates. A buzz-tone epic, it belongs to no school of sound, sprung from its own unique shell. Also recorded on 11 April, with subsequent overdubs by Soft Machine, ‘No Good Trying’ was an extraordinary new song, which unfolds as dialogue between Barrett and a woman hiding secrets. The woman stokes Syd’s jealousy and paranoia by hiding her hands and face. Lovers’ hands flicker across the album, a Barrett metaphor for secrets or lies, also a simile for games of cards in which Syd is on a losing streak.

What comes through clearly is Syd’s dread certainty that he is being lied to, heightening his paranoia. The bludgeoning fuzzed chords amplify a queasy undertow paralleling the damning lyrics, as do the subtle backwards guitar parts Syd overdubbed over Soft Machine’s subsequent organ, bass and drums.

The bleak, fuzzed-out ‘No Good Trying’ sees Barrett shaking off his acid nightmares, strewn with cryptic chaos. Syd’s voice trembles as he wails of living and dying being one and the same – life as death. A turning point if ever there was one. When Barrett sang those words, he came out of the looking glass from wonderland into bleak realisation.

Gone was the innocence of days past. The song echoes bad trips where trivial specifics assume monumental importance. Syd provides his ultimate commentary on the loss of control. His anxious, woozy delivery conveys that this spinning teacup ride is no fun. Fairground images

prevail, conveying a dizziness that verges on nausea as lights flash in photo-epileptic intensity. On alternate versions, Barrett sounds vexed as he fails to capture the sound in his head.

Still, modern groups can spend days on one overdub, never mind one song. Barrett works with diligent effort. His extended, jangled rhythm-guitar sections bubble like a cauldron, cross-rhythms churning with delirious ease, rhythmic tangents to lay the groundwork for overdubbed backwards guitar. His time is good and playing steady, with dense rhythmic changes. When not strung out on Mandrax, Syd's sense of rhythm appeared intact. On this alternate take, his deep immersion in rhythmic cycles stands out amid, at times, painfully bare tracks. What Kris DiLorenzo called: 'A rhythmic strumming full of arbitrary and often clever tempo shifts and reversals, punctuated with extreme dramatic bursts and tenuous *pianissimo*.'

Next, Barrett added vocal and guitar to the backing track for 'Late Night', a song that appears to date from the end of 1965, influenced by the Beatles' *Help*. It hinged on a C/G# chord that echoed 'You've Got to Hide Your Love Away', and three-semitone drop like that found in the Beatles' 'If I Fell'. A gorgeous solo with bent notes wavering ends with *glissando* in see-sawing rhythm. Pushing up with *glissandi*, drifting down, and finally ending on a soaring crescendo.

Where *glissandi* on *Piper* evoked leaps through space, here they evoke the passage of time, or accent rhythm in a holding pattern. Barrett's vocal is grafted with difficulty onto the erratic backing track in a clipped monotone. The flattened vocal does not waver save for a dramatic diatonic ascending and descending couplet that rounds out each verse. As he sings with clarity and conviction, his lyrics stun with simple beauty.

Barrett makes ample use of internal rhyme. Subtle shifts in phrasing summarise his gifts at parrying rhythm, melody and words, with the haunting third line sung in lilting waltz-time. His fragile voice and guitar make for profoundly human music. Both familiar and distant, much like being invited into someone's inner world, as if Syd is playing to no one but himself. Yet these are not songs of defeat; rather each song affirms his existence. Even as Syd described feelings of unreality, he is all too

aware of reality, which offers a vital distinction between schizophrenia and other psychotic states.

Barrett sighs in mild exasperation after the false starts. Like dictating over the phone, taking care to ensure his enunciation is correct, though with little matching feeling, he sings in a flat monotone stripped of emotional nuance, making it all the more dramatic when he comes careening back with ironclad emotion.

'Love You' is a whimsical tune dating back to Cambridge, in which Barrett sings on autopilot, trying three different tempos to see which works best. A jaunty music-hall busking style predominates, with chromatic riffs. His nonsense lines are more in the vein of Lewis Carroll's *Jabberwocky* than his later clanging rhymes. A jangling tack piano, sprung from a music hall or New Orleans whorehouse, shadows the verses.

Lead and backing vocals were added to 'Golden Hair', showing that Barrett had regained his voice. He eschewed studio trickery for doubling the vocal, accompanying his own lead. Gone were artificial double tracking and the woe-begotten elf choruses of his waning days in Pink Floyd. Working through his backlog at an impressive rate, the fruitful session showed Barrett had given these songs much thought since the attempts with Jenner broke down.

Unfortunately, Mandrax abuse stirred again and dropped on Syd's world like a detonation charge into a placid pool. The strain of his calamitous year swamped by the tablets blankets the album in a fine but heavy haze. Mandrax, like *The Madcap Laughs*, has a curious combination of simultaneous clarity and cloaked confusion. One fears that the cloak hides jagged emotions.

Mixing cannabis and downers was the norm for psychedelic heydayers gone too far. Moreover, the blight of euphoric downers figured in the downfall of the sixties, as several of the decade's prime movers met their end with Mandrax coursing through their veins. In combination, Mandrax and cannabis were perfect for cooling post-acid jitters, though useless for much else. 'I wasn't aware Syd was taking them before he left the Floyd,' says Jenny Fabian. 'After, he was in a complete Mandrax trance. When you read about Syd's lethargy and vagueness, that wasn't acid, it was Mandrax.'

Mandrax wreaked havoc with Syd's sense of time. He switched gears with such abrupt lurches that the sound levels were thrown off. Barrett was inadvertently creating dynamics in tune with post-punk, ten years too soon. His producers and engineers were baffled and often annoyed with his haphazard approach and seeming lack of discipline. His balance shot, he stumbled into microphones and sometimes fell off his stool. One friend of Syd's took Mandrax once and never did it again, as she didn't like 'the feeling of being bludgeoned'.

'I had a Mandrax prescription for ten years of my life,' admits Duggie Fields, 'and it didn't do that to me. Drugs are a catalyst. How you use them is how you use them. Drugs have their incipient qualities, but it's up to you if you get affected, to a degree. No one makes you take them or keep on taking them. Mandrax was banned, but I thought Mandrax was a very good drug. If you are going to take downers, a stronger down than most. Dangerous mixed with alcohol, dangerous when taken in excess. I knew someone who wouldn't get out of bed before she had taken a Mandrax.

'Syd took mandies in a way I wouldn't have taken them. I would take half a tablet at a time, occasionally a whole one. Syd one day took four, crazy. He might have smoked some dope as well. We couldn't decide whether to take him to hospital or not. I was sitting on him, we were worried he would vomit and choke. He was frothing at the mouth when we found him on the floor of the bathroom.'

Mandrax continued to bring out violent tendencies in Barrett, dredging darkness from his psyche, and leaving broken objects in his wake. Alone in the flat, unable to open kitchen units, he smashed glass-fronted cabinets to pieces. Showing up at Gilmour and Emo's door with his hands bleeding, he invented a complicated story about an altercation with a taxi driver. When Duggie returned home, he found blood trailing from the kitchen.

A Mandrax overdose could result in a loss of sensation, and the inability to control muscles. It could also produce short-lived paranoid psychosis, with visual and auditory hallucinations and rambling delusions. The secondary ingredient in Mandrax was diphenhydramine – an antihistamine, sedative and hypnotic sold over the counter as Benadryl in America and Dimedrol in Britain, diphenhydramine was a potent anti-

cholinergic. It counteracted the sensory overload associated with excess cholinergic action in psychotic states. Barrett might have been self-medicating with Mandrax.

Syd would have been battered by auditory illusions of sounds loud or clear, faint or distinct, nearer or further away; visual illusions where things seemed clear or blurred, near or far, large and small; and illusions of recognition, where the present seemed familiar, strange, altered or unreal. His emotional state would have been affected as the drug boosted feelings of fear, loneliness, and sorrow.

Mandrax offered an escape, though it compounded reality. The neurotransmitter acetylcholine transmits signals associated with memory. As diphenhydramine interrupts these signals, this often results in items of recall being misdirected. One user said, 'In high doses, thoughts in the back of your mind appear to exist, and be real. Mandrax enhanced music, in an odd way. Emotional power was amplified, along with rhythm, even if you were the only one hearing music in that manner. The drug encourages not hallucinations, but delusional thinking. Random things, people, places, and stories emerge from the back of one's mind.'

Mandrax was thus a double dose hypnotic. Jenny Fabian recalled it as, 'A fuzzy wonderland, like being in a blurred, arty movie. Mandrax was handy when I got fucked up about things, you didn't have face up to anything.'

'No Man's Land' is post-punk's first birthing pang, recorded on 17 April by Syd on his Telecaster, with blasts of Octavia and Buzz-Tone fuzz pedal. The song featured Jerry Shirley on cataclysmic, stuttering drums and John 'Willie' Wilson's pumping bass. Wilson played drums in the Newcomers with Gilmour between 1962 and '63, and went on to play in Joker's Wild and Bullitt. Jerry Shirley, seventeen years old, knew Syd from time spent in Cambridge as drummer in the Valkyrie. Lee Jackson of Booker T & the MG's and the Jimi Hendrix Experience's Mitch Mitchell heavily influenced his drum style.

Syd asked Wilson to do the session, and Shirley asked to attend as well. (Willie and Jerry Shirley also knew each other from Cambridge and shared a flat round the corner from Syd.) Wilson played drums on 'No Man's Land' and 'Here I Go'. After the takes with Syd were laid down,

Shirley overdubbed the bass part on ‘No Man’s Land’. Because Syd changed the chords in the verse on every take, Shirley couldn’t nail his part live. There is no bass guitar on ‘Here I Go’, which features just Syd and Willie.

Barrett, with Hendrix, was one of five guitarists to get the first Octavia pedal from Roger Mayer’s workshop early in 1969. Syd was intrigued by the Octavia’s tone-bending qualities. Its frequency-doubling circuitry synthesised a second note an octave higher than the note played on guitar. The sound becomes tangibly different if a fuzz unit is sequenced in front of the Octavia: an upper octave double is created. Syd selected the Telecaster’s neck pickup, and used the tone control to roll off treble, damping any bright harmonics.

Unusually, the trio took over Studio Two, where the Beatles recorded. The larger room allowed the impromptu group to let loose and hit their instruments a bit harder. Volume drove Barrett on. Three blisteringly loud takes were completed. Working at a rapid clip, Barrett added his vocal and Shirley redid his bass line. Again, the repeating lyrical motif of holding another’s hand as symbolic of infidelity was employed.

The overdriven fuzz and Octavia coursing through ‘No Man’s Land’ was reminiscent of Stooge Ron Asheton’s fuzz epics. Barrett’s impressive vocal weaved from mumble to howl. On one verse, he lapsed into several stanzas of inaudible double-tracked mumbles. ‘Originally the words were meant to be heard clearly, but we went and actually did it,’ offered Syd, by way of explanation. ‘That’s how it came out, which wasn’t really how I planned it.’

Malcolm Jones stated that the vocal was recorded unintelligibly, suggesting it was intentional. This digression is only the most overt example on an album rife with internal dialogue. Amid a *glossolalia* of unintelligible utterances seemingly culled from a trance-like state, one line springs out – Syd murmuring ‘*heavily spaced*’ – marking a midpoint between Keith Rowe’s transistor radio to ‘source’ melody in AMM and the *musique concrète* of babbling televisions later found on Pink Floyd’s *The Wall*.

Having got that purgative out the way, the mood changed one hundred and eighty degrees for Barrett’s music hall ode, ‘Here I Go’, with Wilson pulling out the wire brushes. Exercising his gift for inferring a seesaw of

moods in the same eight bars, Syd sings a cliché music-hall vamp to establish mood. Bouncing between B, Gb, and a tenuous but unconflicted B major. Then, unexpected chromatic chords accompany a patent Barrett grammatical descent to the lowest note in his vocal range, with caustic growling conveying the girl's condescension.

This destabilising chromaticism promotes a sense of harmonic uncertainty. The last note wavers, seemingly unresolved. In a simple, subtle touch, transcending somewhat camp appropriation of music hall, Syd sends the jaunty mood spiralling to sour accusation. Then he bounds back into the music-hall shuffle with sophisticated swing-eighths versus straight-eighths between verse and chorus.

'A sad thing is I had a tape of Syd playing his music for many years, but no longer have, and have no idea where it is,' Joe Boyd explains. 'The tunes represent to me a side of Syd's personality, very melodic. Imagine 'Arnold Layne' or 'Bike' done not by the Pink Floyd but done by a guy with a guitar, in a slightly skiffle or music-hall style. Take those melodies outside the context of Pink Floyd. You see a guy with wit, jaunty humour and great sense of melody and playfulness. That was an aspect of Syd, and side of Syd, I wanted to do more with. After the Pink Floyd session for "Arnold Layne" I even discussed with Peter Jenner doing a solo record with Syd, though nothing came of it. The tape had six songs, including one we were going to do with the Purple Gang, "Here I Go".' The tape was lost at Boyd's flat at 90 Westbourne Terrace, according to the Purple Gang's Chris Beard. 'Here I Go' betrays its origins, written in June 1966, when the Kinks' 'Sunny Afternoon' was receiving heavy radio airplay.

'"Here I Go" used a music-hall style chord structure,' noted Jones. 'With an unusual introduction and theme, this was Syd at his relaxed best. Syd nearly always had lyrics on a stand, in case of occasional lapse of memory. This song was the only one I remember him needing no cue sheet. The whole recording done "live", with no overdubs. Syd changed from rhythm to lead guitar at the end, the change noticeable.'

The song pre-dated Syd's breakdown. While his memory of songs like 'Here I Go' and 'Bob Dylan Blues' was intact, he needed to consult sheets for everything else. The older the song, the easier recall and

rendition was. Unblocked by emotional weight, Barrett snapped out of his haze to reconnect with the mood that had powered the song's writing.

'Syd's guitar playing could, at times, be extremely erratic,' wrote Jones. 'He would frequently switch from playing rhythm to lead at double the volume, setting metres well into the red and requiring a retake. A matter of having too many ideas and wanting to record them all at once.'

If Jones thought disciplined and productive sessions represented standard Barrett procedure, he was in for rude surprise. On 23 April, he and Syd took the tube from Earls Court to St John's Wood. Settling in for the long ride, Jones noticed Syd was carrying a small, portable Uher cassette player. 'What's that for, Syd?' asked Jones. 'I'd like to overdub some motorbike noises on to "Rhamadan",' said Syd in his quiet voice. 'I've been out on the back of a friend's bike with the cassette player. They're all ready to put onto the "Rhamadan" four-track.'

Barrett played the tape to bemusement of tube commuters. Jones was speechless. 'Terrible! Not only poor quality for casual listening, it was no good for professional recording. Syd was insistent, so I said nothing more until we got to Abbey Road.' They marched up the road, Syd loping along with hands thrust into his velvet coat, walking in his customary elastic gait. Entering the gate, they crossed the gravel driveway and went up stairs and down the hall to Studio Three.

As a restless Syd wandered in and out the studio, Jones and engineer Peter Mew spent the first hour trying to connect Syd's small recorder to the four-track master machine. Their efforts proved to be in vain, and Mew went downstairs to ask workshop staff if they could please make a connecting lead from spare parts. Half an hour later, Syd's rough motorcycle recording was dubbed onto 'Rhamadan''s chaotic drum track. Syd smiled as the rumbling motorcycle and duelling conga drums, beating to a rhythm all of their own, boomed through the control room's speakers. Mew and Jones were appalled at the track; full of honking horns, long pauses at traffic lights, and recorded so low that tape hiss threatened to drown even the erratic drums. Mew and Jones spent another hour making a thirty-second motorcycle loop from sound-library tapes. By which time Syd had lost interest. 'Rhamadan' remains unheard.

Purported bootlegs are the first minute and a half of ‘Lanky (Part One)’, recorded at the same 1968 session.

With Jones sidelined by illness, Barrett supervised a session to transfer four-track recordings onto eight-track tape in anticipation of Soft Machine coming in. In an efficient four-hour session, he even put a spontaneous overdub onto ‘Love You’ as the tape rolled. Sequencing tracks in this order makes for an even flow from track to track. The sole instance where we glimpse Syd’s sequencing, a warm haven of measured moods: ‘It’s No Good Trying’, ‘Terrapin’, ‘Opel’, ‘Clowns and Jugglers’, ‘Love You’, ‘Golden Hair’, ‘Late Night’ and ‘Swan Lee’.

Soft Machine arrived at Abbey Road on 3 May. Hopper said, ‘Syd had most tracks just put down, guitar and vocal. He said, “I’d like you to play on these two tracks and do what you can.” He didn’t even tell us how it went; we had to listen until we had some idea. His music was not symmetrical, you had to listen and then it changed suddenly.’

Since no one could anticipate Syd’s erratic tempo or odd-numbered bars, the recording method was reversed, with rhythm overdubbed onto Syd’s idiosyncratic guitar and vocals. They struck a fair balance between avant-jazz and freeform rock on ‘Love You’, ‘No Good Trying’ and ‘Clowns and Jugglers’. Mike Ratledge laid in with frantic blips on the studio’s Hammond organ for the last track while Wyatt filled in on tambourine. Robert Wyatt thought the sessions were rehearsals. Wyatt asked, ‘What key is that in, Syd?’

> Barrett: ‘Yeah!’
>
> Wyatt: ‘That’s funny Syd, there’s a bar of two-and-a-half bars and then it seems to slow up and then there’s five beats there.’
>
> Barrett: ‘Oh, really?’

With the tape running, Soft Machine tried to work it out, feeling their way around the songs. Wyatt’s drumming fluctuated between superb and shambolic, which suits the tracks well. Hugh Hopper told jazz magazine *Eartrip*: ‘We went along. He’d got the guitar and voice tracks down already. He was erratic, so not four bars, one and a half, two – whoops –

start in another key! We're sitting trying to learn this in the studio in Abbey Road.'

'Wonderful bunch of songs,' Wyatt told the *Guardian*. 'I came into the studio and stumbled about, trying to get the hang of these out-of-tempo tunes. Then said I was ready to start.'

Barrett watched Soft Machine play from the control room with an inscrutable expression but seemed pleased, noting, 'I thought Soft Machine were good fun. They were playing on *Madcap*, except for Kevin Ayers.' Syd poked his head around the door and announced: 'Right, thank you very much. Don't worry. I've been recording all the time. Thanks, fine, that's it.'

'We were still learning it, but he was happy,' recalled Hopper. 'He was chaotic, even then drifting a bit. A nice record, it couldn't be anyone else – he had his own total planet.'

'A quiet, taciturn bloke, not a bit mad,' said Wyatt. 'I liked the tunes on *The Madcap Laughs* and the way we did them. The final recording like a sketch of a painting never completed. Dead punk when you come to think of it.'

Wyatt recalled, 'I liked him. Shy, thoughtful, and definitely onto something. So easygoing you didn't know what he wanted, or whether he was pleased with it or not. He seemed pleased. I was brought up, musically, in the fifties. If you want eccentricity, non-verbal weird signals you have to pick up, you cannot beat jazz musicians. Working with Syd Barrett was a piece of cake. I found him courteous and friendly. I cannot think of anything wrong with him. I liked his songs – musically and lyrically. I liked the way he sang them. I cannot fault him. I don't think he did anything wrong that I know of. Not everybody fits into the business. I know from personal experience, it's not easy.'

Two days the later rough mixes were dubbed onto a reel, Syd's last session for over a month, and his last with Malcolm Jones. Though Jones denied they were about to pull the plug, EMI balked at the expense and length of sessions. Barrett attended a Pink Floyd gig on 30 May in Croydon, an impressive two-and-a-half-hour suite dubbed 'The Man' and 'The Journey'.

Afterwards, Barrett came backstage to discuss Pink Floyd taking over production duties. Waters said, 'Syd came and saw David and asked him

for help. Then Peter Jenner and Andrew King saw EMI and said the boys were going to help, give us another chance. EMI said all right and gave us two days, but we had a gig on the second day, so we had three sessions, one afternoon and two evenings. We went in and recorded seven tracks in three sessions; fantastic songs.'

Gilmour agreed to help, having wrapped up the bulk of his work on Pink Floyd's *Ummagumma*. 'EMI understood Syd's potential. They knew he was very talented and wanted him to carry on. They got Malcolm Jones who started recording this album and he spent ages on it. EMI thought too much money had been spent and nothing achieved. Syd came and asked if we could help him.'

On 12 June, Gilmour and Waters accompanied Syd to Abbey Road. Gilmour said, 'Roger and I sat with him after listening to all his songs at home. "Syd, play this one. Syd, play that one." We sat him on a chair with a couple of mikes in front of him and got him to sing the song. On some of them, we just put a little bit of effect on the track with echo and double tracking. On one or two others, we dubbed a bit of drums and a little bass and organ. One side of the album was six months' work and we did the other tracks in two and a half days. The potential of some of those songs, they could have been fantastic.'

With Waters and Gilmour in the control booth, Syd kicked off with a new version of 'Clowns and Jugglers' (now re-titled 'Octopus'). Ten takes ensued. On the eleventh, all were satisfied. A shorter, more up-tempo version clipped a verse from the original. The sheer number of false starts and musical breakdowns suggest that Barrett felt rushed.

Next, 'Golden Hair' was remade over eleven takes, with the last making the final cut. Augmented by an immaculate cymbal grazed with mallets and processed with echo, Barrett's acoustic three-chord melody glides with transparent clarity. Alternate take five saw Syd harmonising with himself in an exquisite call-and-response to the Rapunzel-like woman locked in a tower.

'Golden Hair' was suffused with a meditative droning organ variation on one chord. Gilmour added vibraphone, and Waters a cymbal edge for shimmering overtones. Syd added a trio of vocals, which have him close, intimate and howling from the distance. A haunting madrigal, infused with atmospheric richness around a simple arrangement, 'Golden Hair'

finds a strong echo in Waters's pastoral 'Cirrus Minor' (from March) and 'Grantchester Meadows' (in June). Mike McInnis, editor of Floyd webzine *Spare Bricks*, noted, 'Waters was writing "Grantchester Meadows", replete with Barrettesque wordplay, assonance, and alliteration. An evocative reminiscence of a place from his youth set to remarkably simple acoustic-guitar backing.' 'Golden Hair' was one of Barrett's earliest songs, written when he and friends sat at the Mill Pond. Words were taken verbatim from James Joyce's 1907 *Chamber Music*. (Soft Machine also drew from *Chamber Music* on their ill-fated single 'Love Makes Sweet Music').

'Dark Globe', recorded in two takes, is Syd's masterpiece. A poignant acoustic lament of love lost and never regained, its emotional directness finds few parallels in English popular music. The melody bears a hint of the traditional Lutheran Christmas hymn 'Away in a Manger', which Syd and friends sang as children in the front room at Hills Road.

The bare bones of the song date from 1965. Its chords and lyrics bear some resemblance to Bob Dylan's 'Master of War'. The song seems to have been finished at the beginning of 1969, when the Bee Gee's 'I Started a Joke' was a melancholy radio hit. They share chords and some sentiment, though Syd stripped away the Gibb Brothers' lachrymose touches. An upward swinging semitone linked to a similar melodic motion in 'Swan Lee'; an inflection that led Malcolm Jones to speculate on influences from jazz saxophonists.

Like John Clare, Barrett's nature imagery formed a subtle psychological self-portrait. The magic anticipation when Syd pauses, guitar and voice suspended for a second, was a peerless reading of transparent heartbreak.

The title appears nowhere in the song, plucked instead from *The Two Towers* by Tolkien. In Chapter IX: The Palantír, Tolkien writes: 'The thought of the dark globe seemed to grow stronger as all grew quiet.'

'Dark Globe''s desolate appeal is embodied in its raw honesty, rife with fear of abandonment. Barrett pleads with the listener, asking if he'd be missed in a strained voice that rings with the full gamut of emotions; from accusation to disbelief, from anger to astonishment. As he sang, Gilmour and Waters watched from the control room. The sentiment of abandonment took on far more poignant tone.

The song has an asymmetrical rhythm, with verses flitting in and out of waltz time. Waltz time in Syd's music has specific emotional charge, recalling falling in love, the sway of memory, excitement and anticipation. In 'Dark Globe' and 'Long Gone', these are farewell waltzes, a last dance.

'Dark Globe' is a song about near drowning, betrayal, islands, and isolation. Syd wasn't sentimental for past loves, even though he may have been melancholic at times. More likely, he referred to his lost band. He may have been seen as having attempted to sabotage the band by some, but at times, it was as though he was biding time and sadly casting around for lost principles he believed were once there. Syd struggled not with sanity or his situation, but rather from the loss of purity he struggled to regain in isolation.

In a sharp mood change, the next verse finds Syd singing a plaintive, gentle couplet; a brief return to his faded happy memories of Cambridge and Vivien 'Twig' Brans, though Barrett's voice cracks, showing strain. Declaring himself bound in Eskimo chains suggests his ambivalence about Iggy the Eskimo. 'This probably refers to the evolutionary chain, not to a specific chain,' observes Jenny Spires. 'Syd was on a much higher "spiritual" plane, not so much on the material. He may have been painted as some acid casualty who'd lost his way clinging on, but he did have integrity.'

Syd was still trying to rise above what happened to him with Pink Floyd. No one in rock had self-analysed to that extent before, and his lyrics leave little doubt as to what Barrett made of his LSD sojourns. There is a sense that he is about to be subsumed by a dying of the light. Such desperate melancholy, combined with bare arrangements, echoed John Lennon's similarly cathartic *Plastic Ono Band*, perhaps the true parallel to *The Madcap Laughs*' cataloguing of emotional upheaval.

Waters told Mark Paytress: '"Dark Globe" is the one that represents it most strongly for me, that expresses his inability to cope so eloquently.' David Bowie said, 'The highlight track for me is "Dark Globe"; gloriously disturbing and poignant all at once.'

'He seemed to me to be on something like Mandrax during most sessions for *The Madcap Laughs*,' recalled Gilmour. 'The nightmare of trying to make the record, truly a difficult thing to do in the short period

EMI gave us to get it done. There are some wonderful songs in there. He didn't seem to have to search for a melody or a word, they always seemed to come easily to him.'

In response to a query from a fan, Barrett wrote to *Melody Maker* in June, saying, 'There have been complications regarding the LP but it is now almost finished and should be issued by EMI in a few months. I now spend most of my time writing.'

On 13 June Syd dubbed vocals and Telecaster onto 'Octopus', with Gilmour adding drums and bass. Gilmour had to leave the studio at four in the afternoon to get a train for a gig in Exeter. As the Floyd had to finish mixing *Ummagumma* and go on tour, there would not be another session for more than a month.

A week later, along with half the world, Syd watched the Apollo moon landing on television with Sue Kingsford, Mickey Finn and sundry other friends, never saying a word. BBC's coverage included Pink Floyd performing an impromptu jam titled 'Moonhead'.

Syd had difficulty saying no to his many guests. While there were girls and friends around, Syd was not sociable and didn't answer the door. 'Syd would still get all these girls coming round, or people wanting to hang around,' Fields explains. 'I could let people hang out and carry on working, but I did find it difficult. I could end up in here working. I had a TV and there would be a dozen people watching TV. They would all be stoned and when the television show ended, they would turn to watch me working. I was the only activity. That drains your energy.

'I never had to lock people out to the same extent Syd did. I managed to work, whereas Syd wouldn't manage to work. Syd had problems working on his own and with people around. Once he'd left Pink Floyd, he had money coming in so he didn't have to think too much about money. It wasn't much money, but he didn't have to get a job. He could say he was a painter, but he didn't have to sell a painting. He didn't even have to finish a painting.'

Barrett became involved with Lindsay's flatmate and modelling accomplice, nineteen-year-old Gala Pinion. Pinion came from near Ely, outside Cambridge, and became Syd's last love and the final relationship in his life. She worked as waitress at the Chelsea Drug Store, an ultra-modern glass and chrome building at the bulkhead of the King's Road.

Barrett lurked about, looking at records or magazines while eyeing the attractive and vibrant redhead, spying her from the corner of his eye. Gala also worked at Freddie Mercury's clothes stall at Kensington Market. Syd would nonchalantly drop in. A spark was struck. She soon moved into the flat, along with her dog. They hooked up in May or June, and had known each other for a few years, as she was an old school friend of Lindsay's and sometimes visited them in Egerton Court.

At first, Gala seemed to steady Barrett's aberrant moods, though this proved a brief respite. Pinion couldn't help notice how Syd stared at Lindsay with a fixed glare and behaved oddly whenever she was around. 'By the time Gala was living here, Syd was definitely becoming dysfunctional,' explains Fields. 'We had a conversation where Syd was telling me off because I wasn't famous. Then Syd told Gala off because she was a waitress. Then referring to himself as a "has-been pop star". That was shocking, a has-been at age twenty-three. Whether a thought of the moment, or deep thought, I don't know, but it stuck in my mind.'

Barrett became violent again, though he found Gala to be a feisty match for his outbursts. A tough East Anglian girl, Gala gave as good as she got, matching Barrett slap for slap. 'I remember violence between Gala and Syd,' confirms Fields. 'Fights in the flat that would have neighbours threatening to call the police. The police did come on one occasion. I had to physically break up fights between them, while getting hit by both of them in the middle.'

Duggie was dismayed when one fight ended with chocolate mousse being thrown across his new painting. 'I knew there was a problem. Syd would not open his curtains, ever. He pinned a second layer on top, so they could not be opened. He never opened the window, which made the room smell. I would wait for him to unlock the door to go to the bathroom, go, and open the windows. The stench did get overwhelming. It couldn't have been good for him to live in. He must have been getting oxygen starvation! He would do little things, which started as tests. We would be talking and he would flip a lit cigarette across the room. You were supposed to leave it; it was uncool to go after it. His room was littered with cigarette ends. When Gala brought her dog, dog shit too. It's one thing if you drop a cigarette and put it out, but even then, it's not something you normally do.

‘Syd was using his power and his ego, playing games. Abusing his power, whether trying to shock or test to see what reaction he could get, combined with childish lack of care and concern. Syd was a spoilt child with an adoring mother, who gave him no correction. I sat thinking, “I’m not going to pick up that cigarette,” but worrying if anything would catch fire. I had to get used to it happening.

‘It’s easy to remember negative stories and not someone’s magic. When Syd was good, he could be the dominant person in the room for his charm. He enjoyed that, he could sit telling stories and everyone would love him.’

13. WITHIN THE DARK GLOBE

‘And Los round the dark globe of Urizen,
Kept watch for Eternals to confine,
The obscure separation alone;
For Eternity stood wide apart,
As the stars are apart from the earth.’

The Book of Urizen
William Blake, 1794

‘At first the globe was dark, black as jet, with the moonlight gleaming on its surface. Then there came a faint glow and stir in the heart of it, and it held his eyes, so that now he could not look away. Soon all the inside seemed on fire; the ball was spinning, or the lights within were revolving. Suddenly the lights went out.’

The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers
J.R.R. Tolkien, 1954

At the 5 July Rolling Stones free concert, organised by Blackhill, two hundred thousand converged on Hyde Park. As Brian Jones had died two days earlier, Mick Jagger read a poem by Shelley before releasing white butterflies, most of which had died in the unventilated boxes. Barrett’s Cambridge mate Charlie Weedon was the Stones’ road manager, and standing next to him that day at the side of the stage, as far as he remembers, was Syd.

When Iain Moore left on a whim to spend the summer skylarking in the Balearics, Syd panicked, thinking his friend had abandoned him. Barrett collected and cashed a large royalty cheque; he threw thousands of pounds into a carrier bag with some unwashed clothes and had Gala Pinion drive him to Heathrow airport. Arriving late, Syd dashed out onto

the tarmac as the plane taxied to the end of the runway. Ticket-counter staff radioed the cockpit, a ladder was wheeled over and Syd boarded.

Underground physician Doctor Sam Hutt told writer Jonathon Green: 'Formentera was a little island off Ibiza. Formentera and Ibiza were part of the hippy trail and many successful drug smugglers bought homes there. Formentera was, in its way, a paradise. Like Southern California, and incredibly cheap. You could live for eight months, like a king, on £100. Formentera is very arid, but people are nice and it's a good place to drop out, to be inactive. Taj Mahal and Joni Mitchell were two famous people you came across.'

British travellers have long had an affinity for the Balearics; the sun-drenched islands are the inverse of England's wet countryside. The Balearics lent themselves to hedonistic exploration, and recovery. From George Sand and Robert Graves to Daevid Allen and Kevin Ayers, the islands offered a pleasant respite for those in exile from Britain.

Late-sixties English hippies in Ibiza were echoed twenty years later by the English ecstasy contingent who created the rave scene, and gave way to disco-biscuit-eating plastic people recreating Blackpool in the sun. When Syd and his Cambridge friends played guitars in a beach cove, or ravers tumbled from Space at dawn to watch the sunrise at Café del Mar on mushrooms, they, in turn, echoed Phoenician revellers two thousand years before who had washed up on the beach after all-night bacchanals.

Syd arrived in Ibiza and walked to San Fernando square, where Emo, Aubrey Powell and old Cambridge friend Mary Wing spotted him. Barrett casually walked over and said, 'Hello.' After a day or two in Ibiza, they took the ferry to Formentera, and walked up the straight road into Sant Ferran de ses Roques. A simple restaurant, La Fonda Pepe was adjoined by a hostel, bakery and scant few houses, where hippies, writers, students and young Spaniards gathered.

The cumulative effects of drugs and isolation had left Barrett hypersensitive; he seemed restless, and more than a little careless. Syd, ever neglectful of his own body, seemed oblivious to the Spanish sun and got severe sunburn. His moods cycled rapidly, but slowly Formentera soothed his nerves. Emo says Syd didn't speak much, though he had good focus and a fixed smile. Syd would snap from his torpor and seem

his old jovial self. ‘Syd was still great to be with and we had some amazing times,’ recalled Emo. ‘He would play the guitar or come down to the beach with us. Laughing and telling us a joke one minute and then suddenly go back to his land of never-never.’

Barrett also spent time with Mary Wing, who came to Formentera in 1967 with her husband Marc Tara-Tessier and never left. During the day, they idled away hours at La Fonda Pepe or the Blue Bar, a shack on the beach where Bob Dylan once jammed. Days were spent getting supplies, or playing guitar for two or three hours. Together, they clambered to deserted beach coves at sunset, and sat strumming guitars and singing. Come nightfall, they would gather branches for the fireplace, get stoned, and chat in open-aired rooms.

Borrowing Tessier’s guitar, Syd reconnected with songwriting. ‘I have been doing lots of things – things interesting for me,’ he explained. ‘I’ve done a lot of traipsing around. I’ve been back to Ibiza, Spain. I first went there with Rick, three years ago. It’s an interesting place to be. I’ve written quite a lot too. I’ve been writing in all sorts of funny places.’

Barrett walked along dusty paths, across the arid, moonlike landscape, cutting through copses of stunted Sabina pine trees. He sat at the beach, looking at a clear, crystal-blue sky. After lingering around the hippy market at El Pilar de La Mola on the eastern tip of the island, he wandered by the whitewashed windmill with canvas sails on stark wooden vanes outside Sant Francesc Xavier that featured on the cover of Pink Floyd’s *More*. The Balearic sun had a restorative, even purgative effect; much like Kevin Ayers’s flight to Deià restored and purged him into making four classic albums.

Syd took a guitar wherever he went, and worked out lithe chord progressions. As for lyrics, Tessier recalled in Tim Willis’s *Madcap*: ‘He borrowed my guitar. Then he sat there, chose a letter of the alphabet and thought of his three favourite words starting with the same letter. He wrote them on three bits of paper, threw them in the air and wrote them again in the order he picked them up. Then, he filled in the rest. He had given himself a structure.’

Syd borrowed here from avant-garde poet Tristan Tzara, whose experiments in word cut-outs and random selection provided his outline. Barrett had a good rest, and wrote an evocative snapshot, redolent of

Thomas Hardy's 'The Colonel's Soliloquy'. ('*I'm apt at change of wind to feel a twitch, or at a change of clime*.') From the songs that followed, it was evident that Cambridge was heavy on his mind. East Anglian accentual twists, meandering folk and riverside imagery glint like silver coins thrown into the Cam.

Returning to England refreshed, Barrett had one studio session to go. The evening before, Gilmour and Waters came over to Syd's flat and listened to him run through his songs. Stirring his final dose of concentrated writing, his songs from Formentera were deep ruminations on relationships. They contain Barrett's most emphatic acoustic work. The session is filled with flavoursome rhythmic touches, as Barrett twists and turns from one progression to the next, his playing loose and sinuous.

More baffling then, is his loss of vocal control, with pained tuneless singing as he strains outside his natural register. Britta Sweers, in *Electric Folk Rock*, comments that English folk singers traditionally favour singing in quiet natural registers, so that when they sing at higher volume or strain upper reaches of their register, their voices pitch improperly. Barrett's problems here fit well with her description.

On 26 July, Waters and Gilmour joined Barrett for a final frenetic day of recording to round out *Madcap*. Though Gilmour regretted not having more time, the acoustic mini-suite of 'Long Gone', 'She Took a Long Cold Look' and 'Feel', recorded that day, show Barrett at his most unvarnished, honest and vulnerable. Like his pastoral suite on *Piper*, this 'Love Lost Suite' is a marvel to behold, filled with coruscating beauty.

With an appealing, unplugged feel, sung by Syd accompanying himself on acoustic guitar, the trio of songs underscore his core themes – love, loss and abandonment. They form the heart of the album, giving considerable emotional depth to ideas circulating through other songs.

'Long Gone' was concise and unambiguous, recorded in one take, the title recalling Billie Holiday's 'Long Gone Blues'. Brilliant chromatic descents sweep through bitter folk-blues in waltz time as Syd laments. Forsaking whimsy, 'Long Gone' detailed Barrett's loss with unadorned directness.

The song contains singular poetic images of visceral clarity. Like a metronome, Syd repeats words in a clockwork cadence. In the chorus, Barrett employs a three-part vocal harmony, with one voice pitched up,

almost howling, and muted in the mix. Syd obsessed over contrasting and layering harmony vocals. On ‘Long Gone’, a soft, almost whispered voice was double-tracked to a howling wail, with a third flat, conversational voice in the centre. Whispering, wailing and flat, the chorus resounds in uneasy harmony.

Waters and Gilmour expertly blended the harmonised vocal arrangement, as Gilmour added Hammond organ. Cleverly, they doubled Syd’s original vocal with ADT, then added two more harmony vocals. Verses built in inexorable cadence, phrase upon phrase in chromatic ascent to the end of the verse, where they vaporised in melismatic harmony, accompanied by single sustained chords on the Hammond, rife with jazzy ninths.

Barrett draws out the song’s last syllable, as Waters adds a judicious splash of echo. This shows parallels with the stylistic approach and recording technique on Waters’s own ‘Grantchester Meadows’. A solid, astringent acoustic guitar solo shadows the chorus, with descending half steps producing an onomatopoetic evocation of a lover’s footsteps walking away. Flamenco-like chords in the building cadenza reflected Syd’s exposure to Spanish gypsy music while in Formentera.

‘Long Gone’ epitomises the Barrett touch. Simple on the surface, but with melodic twists, subtle accentuations in phrase and rich imagery that add up to a haunting mood piece. These songs have a spirit close to country blues; acoustic open-tuned, steel-stringed laments of love gone wrong, lying women and enemies everywhere. Hearing ‘Devil Got My Woman’ by country bluesman Skip James next to ‘Long Gone’ exposes their similarity in feel. These are songs of loss. Echoes come through time and again across these solo works of the obscure blues tracks Syd and his friends enthused about in the Criterion days – ‘Down South Blues’ by Scrapper Blackwell and Jimmy Yancey’s ‘Rolling The Stone’.

On a new version of ‘Dark Globe’ (here titled ‘Wouldn’t You Miss Me?’), Syd again adds a three-part vocal harmony to the bare vocal and guitar track. The resulting blend is a howling mess – the compilers of *Crazy Diamond* wisely left out the harmony for a raw vocal and guitar track.

Barrett also listened closely to Beach Boys harmonies, which Jenny Fabian recalled him playing non-stop. He remained keen to try things at

different tempos, in different keys, to match the mood he had in mind. He explained, rather cryptically, ‘If you get two strings, it sounds better than one. Most people say just put one, because they don’t know about the two. Once people know about the two, they’re different people.’ Sonny Murray, of ESP fame, observed, ‘When you take two notes on the piano, an octave apart, and play them in rapid alternation, you get a third tone.’

What Barrett seemed to be referring to was the manner in which overtones of strings resonate sympathetically with other strings, the phrase ‘*to have* two strings *to one* bow’ means always having a backup, and another way towards a goal. In music, a double stop is two notes played at once, where separate strings are bowed or plucked simultaneously.

‘She Took a Long Cold Look’ is an expert exploration of a waning relationship, when communication has broken down. That the unspoken end is near hangs heavy. Barrett laments that his partner doesn’t have time to be with him; she looks at him with disdain.

In direct reportage, Barrett even pauses to turn pages in the recording. These describe Cambridge, and the proverbial couple on the grass at Christ’s or Parker’s Piece, holding a splintering romance together. The song brings a powerful emotional impasse into sharp relief.

‘Feel’ is the singular internal monologue in Barrett’s work, a condensed amalgamation his writing strengths. The beauty is he holds nothing back, singing direct and true, leaping from his Mandrax haze. At the end, Syd issues a rare approval: ‘The last one was diamond, actually – all right.’

‘Feel’, like ‘Farewell Angelina’, which Dylan wrote for Joan Baez, utilises an Fmaj7 chord as its fulcrum. Word forms orbit with obsessive regularity around core word ‘*inside*’. With pointed distress, Barrett expresses his desire to return home. London was a million flashing lights away from basking in hot summer air by the River Cam, or walking down the Cut and pushing the iron kissing gate open to Grantchester Meadows. The gate was set between the wooden arms of a half-round enclosure. In a traditional game one refused entry to another until given a kiss. In ‘Feel’, his love is caught forever on the wrong side of the gate.

Blues scholar John J. Olivar notes many correlations between ‘Feel’ and James Joyce’s 1939 novel *Finnegans Wake*. Joyce’s multi-levelled

prose, laden with meaning, crept into Barrett's abstract lyrics. In Barrett's case, multi-layering held meaning together after the object was scuppered. Joyce used elements of schizophrenic language (in the text, he refers to 'schizophrenesis' and 'landeguage'), to create a compelling if confounding classic of modern experimental literature.

Like Joyce's, Barrett's words have a three-dimensionality within multiple rhythms, shattered and reconfigured in a lyrical mosaic. Barrett wove words old and new, partial and whole, into his rich imagery. Their richness was occluded, on closer examination, by a rigour underlying the poetic luxuriance that peeks through his scattershot lines. The fact that Barrett typed his lyrics suggested concrete poems rather than doggerel verse.

The sole surviving lyric sheet for 'It Is Obvious' (or 'Mind Shot') shows editing, with counted beats and measures in his handwriting. Comparison can be drawn with Joyce's rich streams of consciousness, mazes that reach an exit.

In these acoustic songs, Barrett veered toward Celtic balladry, in which the disdain of rhyming for assonance (rhyming of vowel sounds in non-rhyming words) is a league away from an emphasis on rhyming meter in English verse. 'It puts people off their guard,' said Barrett on the mood of the acoustic songs. 'I think that people miss the fact that it's obviously a gentler thing – because it's clever and it's into that more than content. The message might be a bit lost because people find it hard to grasp.' By inference, content is spurious. Feel is all. As Anne-Marie Roulin, author of the Syd Barrett biography *Fish Out of Water*, noted: 'In Barrett's work, there aren't any problems with form and content coexisting, simply because in his music form is content.'

'If It's In You' rounded out the session. A low point, with a shaken and irritable Syd apparently all at sea, Barrett's most disturbing song states his inner dilemma in bold case. Recorded in five takes, each worse than the one preceding, the fifth was included on the album. Syd begins singing before trailing off. Frustrated, he tells Waters and Gilmour, 'Look, you know, I'll start again … I'll start again.' From the control room, Waters or Gilmour says, 'Syd, what about taking the guitar down a semitone so…' Syd cuts him off with a terse, 'No, it's just the fact of going through it. I mean, if we could just cut…' Strumming, Syd wails

painfully and tunelessly, releasing an eleven-syllable vocal *glissando* midway between a war cry and the curdling tones of an Indian *shehnai* oboe, exposing the tears in his psyche.

Play 'If It's In You' for someone who has never heard Syd Barrett before and they might laugh, thinking it a put-on. A Beatles fanatic might tell you his wail sounds like the scale played by *shehnai* player Sharad Gosh on the Beatles' 1968 'The Inner Light'. One Barrett fan wryly notes, 'The tonal quality of Syd's voice on the long scale repeated on each verse borders on a school choir grappling with the descant of *Hosanna in Excelsis* for the first time.'

The strain of getting as much done as possible, with Gilmour and Waters looking from the control room, doubtless added to Syd's anxiety. Malcolm Jones was annoyed by the inclusion of page turning, off-key wails and in-studio mumbles, saying that they 'just made him look a babbling fool. That's creating an image for somebody who didn't necessarily deserve quite as bad as that.'

'The pain that comes from ["If It's In You"] is so raw,' observed Gilmour. 'Sometimes I wonder about some of those songs. The problem was not knowing how far one should go with someone else's angst or pain, especially when it was difficult to tell if they wanted it to sound like that. I was simply unable to get a more professional version of those songs. It was possible he was incapable of performing them in the way he wanted them to be. I worried about it less at the time then I did later. To be honest, I'm still not sure.

'If I was recording it today I don't know if I would include those tracks. That is exactly as it was; it is not painting him in a worse light than he was. Some of those songs feel very raw, very painful. Real cries for help. A man obviously having difficulties. We had to turn his work into something palatable. If his brain had been better functioning, it would have been nice to have recorded him in a more professional way.

'Syd's brain worked in different ways. If I'd tidied it up, you might gain something but you'd lose something too.'

'"If It's In You" is a classic example of Syd in the studio, that and talking in obscure abstracts,' said drummer Jerry Shirley to journalist Kris DiLorenzo. 'Off the wall, the way he talked. "Well, you know, it could be, I mean, midnight like on that, but – it sounds more like – at

four in the morning – at, uh, well, I guess we can't play that one, this – uh, you know, it's all just distorted." All in his head, but only little bits managed to get out his mouth. Then the way he goes into that scream; sometimes he could sing a melody fine. The next time around he would sing a totally different melody, or go off key. Some of his songs are very beautiful. You never knew from one day to the next how it would go.' Shirley was never convinced that Syd was mad. 'I personally witnessed him using his nuttiness, faking it almost. I saw Syd laughing at the whole room. He literally stared right through you but could see right through you.'

Lyrically, 'If It's In You' orbits around the writing of a letter, with scattered imagery of steam trains and rails, and oblique references to bingo halls, Henry Fielding's bawdy 1741 play *Shamela*, which Syd acted in at the Tech, and Thomas Hardy, author of *The Return of the Native*. (The '*Puddletown Tom*' namechecked in the song is Hardy.)

Like Syd's songs, Hardy's poetry is built on subtle stylistic shifts of emotional distance and contrasting intimacy. For Hardy, Puddletown Heath was a Mill Pond-like touchstone. Barrett also references the colonel from Hardy's poem 'The Colonel's Soliloquy'.

Themes in the superlative 'Love Lost' trio expose much about Syd's mind in Formentera, and thread deep into the acoustic heart of *The Madcap Laughs*. They speak poignantly of Syd in transition – his dissolute romance, the onset of maturity, and his break-up with Floyd. Beyond the loaded imagery, Syd's cut-up assembly speaks volumes about his internal tumult. With themes linked in sporadic episodes, like a tone arm on a turntable without a counterweight, Barrett keeps skating out of the groove.

On 5 August, Gilmour and Waters mixed their sessions from multi-track to stereo master. Eleven days later, Gilmour rushed back to finish mixing Malcolm Jones's production on the third and final session. The limited timeframe made for abrupt if effective decisions. The final mix was all Gilmour's work, enhancing the haunted and sepulchral tracks rather than diminishing their raw intensity.

The next morning Gilmour was on a plane to Amsterdam for a live radio performance. During another short break in touring on 6 October, Barrett and Gilmour edited the album's sequence. When people accuse

Pink Floyd of abandoning Barrett, they should consider the work put in at short notice on his behalf. Gilmour chose the album title from a creative mishearing of a lyric in 'Octopus'.

While waiting for Gilmour to return, Barrett and Gala hit the open road. Along with friends Gretta and Rusty, Gala and Syd travelled to the Isle of Wight festival at the end of August to see Bob Dylan and the Band. Next, Rusty and Gretta took Syd and Gala to Solva, Wales to visit Meic Steven's farmhouse. Barrett kept company with musicians such as Steve Took. Syd was a peripheral member of the 'Pink Fairies All-Star Rock'n'roll Show Motorcycle Circus', a very, very informal drinking club formed with Took and Mick Farren from the Deviants. Other members were drawn from Bryan Morrison agency groups, among them Pretty Things Phil May, Twink and John Povey. They would go to the Speakeasy in matching pink coats like a fifties American motorcycle club and heckle the likes of King Crimson, or else fall out of Portobello Road pubs like Finch's and Henneky's.

Mick Farren recalled Steve Took talking volubly at Syd while Syd sat in silence. The others liked having Syd around because he attracted better women, without trying – sometimes without even moving. Much time was spent drinking one another under various tables, popping Mandrax and huffing spliffs. Barrett got heavily spaced and loped along in their wake but soon grew bored with carousing at the bottom of the Grove, and so retreated to his flat.

'When Syd moved to Earls Court, I would see him less often,' recalls David Gale. 'I'd bump into him striding through the street looking pale, dark and threatening. If you said "Hello" to him he'd look straight through you. Clearly we had an acid casualty here, which by now was a familiar sight. At least three or four others put themselves in that place. Some committed suicide and some went into analysis.'

Barrett's retreat, to his room and into the recesses of his mind, was an exile from the impossible demands of life as a pop star. Barrett withdrew to his room while Brian Wilson and the Beach Boys harmonised on 'In My Room' in the background. He drew away.

'When he moved in here, there was just the two of us,' explains Duggie Fields. 'He had left Pink Floyd and wasn't motivated. He had no reason to be. We lived in adjoining rooms. I did all my work in my room.

Sometimes the wall between us seemed transparent. I knew what was going on that side of the wall. I presume Syd knew what was happening on this side. Strange. I knew he'd be lying in bed doing nothing. I knew he'd be lying there thinking, while lying there, he had potential to do anything in the world. The minute he got up, he limited his potential. He kept inhibiting himself by that, so he did nothing in the end. I knew that.

'I always thought that was a mistake. I felt "doing" was enjoyable. I don't know what it was like for him. On the other side, there was me, busy "doing". I didn't do a lot, but I just *did*. Everyone hung around getting stoned all the time. I enjoyed that very much. Then I'd go into my room and paint. I started getting people having problems with this, "Hey man, why aren't you hanging around with us anymore. Have we done something to offend you? Don't you think we're cool anymore?" I would say I was doing my thing, painting. I removed myself from other people so I could work. Syd removed himself from others to be left alone, not specifically to work. He removed himself from others because they always wanted his attention. They wanted him to be charming, which he could play up to, definitely. But then he locked himself in his room against people intruding.'

Barrett withdrew by degrees; locking the door to his many visitors. Fields remembered Syd's evasions as far back as Cromwell Road, whenever he felt overwhelmed by the demands on him. If visitors brought drugs, Barrett opened the door a crack, smiled his familiar impish smile, or some semblance, and ushered them in. Drugs became the last key to unlock Syd's door. Fields remember guests coming over with Mandrax. 'Just give Syd mandies and he'll be friendly.' He told Kris DiLorenzo: 'At other times, he'd be completely jolly. He could be fabulous, the sort of person who had amazing charm. If he wanted your attention, he'd get it – very bright.'

After Iggy moved on, before Gala moved in, there were long stretches where Syd lay alone on his mattress with the blinds shut tight, in the eerie silence of a stifling room. Not painting, not playing or listening to music. The orange bulb making the floorboards look like red steel bars suspended over a green void, drugs gave the illusion time was not slipping by. Long rambling walks led in circles. He wandered to and from Earl's Court tube station. Friends recalled seeing him standing

outside the newsagents at the tube station lost in thought. For someone once effortlessly well dressed, Syd was often unwashed, slightly dazed and unkempt.

Jenny Fabian wondered what had happened to Syd. She heard an acetate of *The Madcap Laughs* and got hold of his telephone number. Though she heard he was far gone, he answered the phone and surprised her with his warm tone. He told her to come round the following afternoon. When she arrived on an assignment from *Harpers & Queen*, a barefoot Syd, sporting a colourful silk neckerchief, smiled, 'Oh, it's you.'

'I found him again living up the road from Earls Court in a flat where he had a room. Again, he didn't speak much. Sitting in the corner on a mattress, and he'd painted every other floorboard alternate colours, red and green. He boiled an egg in a kettle and ate it. He listened over and over again to Beach Boys tapes, which I found distressing. We sat for hours and we may have touched fleetingly. Still the same, only now he wasn't Syd Barrett the star.'

The interview proper did not come off, as Syd was almost silent. The feature was cancelled, and Fabian came away with a strong feeling, which led her to write the following, presented here for the first time:

'We had been sitting on his mattress for several hours, half the time in silence. Not even the usual continual background of records as an excuse – he needed no excuse to be silent. His thoughts had the numerous dimensions that come from boiling one's one brains in acid, and, no longer contained within his physical head, were like currents in the air. I felt no need to get through to him because he was out the other side and miles away. It was as if he was looking at me through a telescope. He could see someone a million different ways. I felt myself changing as he went though his different interpretations of me. When he spoke, I felt that, although he was listening to the conversation, he was also listening to his thoughts.

'Each sentence died after he had spoken it. He found it hard to remember what he said. His voice was soft and gentle. He smiled a lot to himself. He was slender, and his face was thin and pale. His eyes seemed to merge with the violet circles under them, and had to be haunted. His wild hair and unshaven face made him look even more desperate. But he was too far away to touch.

‘The floor of his big room was alternate orange and blue boards which he had painted himself and sometimes found rather disturbing to look at. The curtains were of thin green material, so that the light filtered in to give the room an eerie green glow. His mother had made them, he told me, and he kept them closed all day to make the room feel like a tank. We lay there into the darkness, until he finally turned on the bare orange bulb that hung from the ceiling, giving the room an entirely new dimension.

‘I could hear television coming from the next room but he seemed to have no inclination to go and watch. He was too busy feeding off his brain’s output, which would build up into a cream-slice effect that he could stand back from and contemplate. This contemplation would give rise to another creation, and so on. He was completely self-indulgent with his thought processes, never trying to control or direct them within any bounds of reason. Reasoning was inconclusive and unnecessary to him. One reason led to another indefinitely, like infinity. Surely, reason should prove an answer, but as there was no answer, there was no reason. I remembered all the beautiful songs he had written about gnomes and cats and stars and weird fairyland things. Then he looked straight at me, and said, “Isn’t it boring lying here all day thinking of nothing?”’

‘At Earls Court, he’d already gone to where he was going,’ observes Fabian. ‘His mind had gone there, but his body was still here, functioning in the real world. You couldn’t say he was two people, but he was gone and still living. I don’t know what he thought; I thought he was thinking millions of things. Then for him to say that!’

Fabian wrote: ‘When he spoke, it was vague and disconnected sad stuff about broken guitars and too many people. I couldn’t be sure if he was talking to me, or just thinking out loud, each sentence died away unfinished. Reasoning was inconclusive and unnecessary to him, because one reason led endlessly to another. I asked him if any reason ever led to an answer. He looked startled at the sound of my voice. Then he told me, “As there is no reason, there is no answer.” It seemed there was nowhere left to go, and he knew it.’

The few friends who were able to penetrate his bubble of isolation found that Syd was largely uncommunicative. He made an initial effort, then lapsed into long silences interspersed with fragmented sentences.

Often he stopped in mid-sentence, distracted. What little he did say was often abstract and tangential, and he regularly forgot what he was talking about. As he tried to get ideas across, his words became scrambled. His thoughts, actions and behaviour seemed to act independently. Engrossed in his floating reality, he essentially gave up trying to discriminate between the real and unreal.

In November, Harvest released a Syd Barrett single featuring 'Octopus' with 'Golden Hair' as its B-side. Syd's drawing of a red and blue octopus adorned the sleeve. Barrett remained disinterested in commercial success. Asked how the single was faring in the charts, he shrugged, 'I hadn't noticed. I don't think it was necessarily a good idea to do a single, but it was done. It's a track off the album. I've spent a long time doing it – since I left the group. But it was done at a reasonable pace.'

'Octopus' is rife with startling poetic imagery; each evocative line feeds into the next. It is key in understanding Barrett's genius with words; the entry point where everything shines. A superficially jaunty song about a fairground ride collated with seafaring imagery, 'Octopus' provides a map of Syd's influences. The clearest summation of Syd's manifold inspirations culled from fairytales, nursery whimsy, Romantic poems, and adventure stories. Cultivating multidimensionality through words in tandem with unorthodox chords, 'Octopus' forms a transcendent evocation of moods – of nostalgia for childhood, and the world of fantasy. Lifted lifted near verbatim from the expected Edward Lear, John Clare and Kenneth Grahame and Rudyard Kipling, 'Octopus' proves a map of deftly interwoven sources extending in a wide arc to include Elizabethan sonnets, Shakespeare, the poems of Robert Graves, obscure nursery rhymes, traditional folk songs, 18th-century ballads, excerpts from early 20th-century sporting magazines, Victorian travelogues and Edwardian limericks. (Writer Paul Belbin was first to crack this Rosetta Stone of lyrical inspirations in his essay 'Untangling the Octopus', provoking a sea change in perceptions of Barrett as a fantasist who collated drug-driven, word-salad imagery. As Barrett assumes his rightful place in the canon of English poetics, to which he made vital contributions, biographers build on Belbin's initial findings. The rest is derivation.)

During an oblique interview with Giovanni Dadomo, where Barrett appeared disinterested and answered in the vaguest terms, he came to life when asked about ‘Octopus’. ‘I carried that about in my head for about six months before I actually wrote it so maybe that’s why it came out so well. The idea was like those number songs like “Green Grow the Rushes Ho”, where you have, say, twelve lines each related to the next and an overall theme. It’s like a foolproof combination of lyrics, really, and then the chorus comes in and changes the tempo but holds the whole thing together.’

The words were interconnected and elastic enough to skate over the key change in the chorus. Barrett tuned his guitar a half-step down to Eb for the version on the album, easier to sing in his natural register – one reason Jones, Gilmour and Waters all asked if he wouldn’t prefer to tune his guitar down. The song’s chords are singularly intriguing, festooned with suspended notes and unusual progressions, a sinuous emphatic Ab weaving like a tentacle all the way down to the fade.

The work that went into making ‘Octopus’ confirms its multiple genesis; evident from the sheer volume of takes and retakes, overdubs and versions. First recorded in July 1968, as ‘Clowns and Jugglers’, Jones noted that Syd worked versions through each stage of the album sessions. The central song of *The Madcap Laughs*, ‘Octopus’ integrated pre-breakdown whimsical abandon with dark globe word tangles. ‘“Octopus” is a particular example of [a] recording being discussed as something exceptional because it takes an unusual meter,’ said Barrett. ‘I don’t read much but I think I picked up Shakespeare as a book that just happened to be lying there to read. It was meant to be verse.’

Using morphing images of fairground rides and seafaring poems, Barrett weaves a complex song. ‘I like to have really exciting, colourful songs. I can’t really sing but I enjoy it and I enjoy writing from experiences. Some are so powerful they are ridiculous; the straight scene is the best.’

On 17 December, Barrett left his room to play guitar and sing on ex-Soft Machine guitarist Kevin Ayers’s solo track ‘Religious Experience’. Ayers dropped by Wetherby Mansions and asked Syd if he wanted to go and record. Syd instantly got up. ‘We couldn’t use any of the stuff because it

was all over the place,' Ayers told *Mojo*. Even by Ayers's relaxed recording standards, the session was chaotic. Barrett and Ayers are the two bohemian troubadours of the sixties most noted for their laidback approaches.

Re-titled 'Singing a Song in the Morning', the line-up was Kevin Ayers (vocals and guitar), Richard Coughlan (drums), David Sinclair (organ), and Richard Sinclair (bass). Backing vocals were provided by the impromptu band singing like shrill schoolgirls. Coughlan and the two Sinclairs came from Caravan (and the Wilde Flowers); the lead guitar heard on the released version was played by Ayers. The version with Syd was released decades later, featuring superb duelling guitar work by Barrett and Ayers, with a stunning escalating rave-up riff reminiscent of Jeff Beck. (David Parker confirms that the liner notes to the *Joy of a Toy* re-issue are wrong. Track fourteen, rather than track ten, features both Syd and Ayers.)

Malcolm Jones, engineer at the session, said, 'All I did was mix it. Peter Jenner produced the original track and rather messy. A good song, a catchy tune. Here was me saying, "Hey this is a great record here but it's a bit messy," and so I rubbed Syd out! Well, a great song, let's try for a hit. In those days it didn't matter, we could still put Syd's version on the LP.'

The version without Syd was released as a single in 1970 credited to Kevin Ayers and the Whole World. Ayers says, 'Barrett was displeased with his performance on the song.'

Barrett and Ayers got on well, to the extent that he was invited to open for Kevin Ayers and the Whole World at a festival in the Netherlands scheduled for July 1970. Later Ayers paid direct homage to Barrett on 'Oh! Wot a Dream' (from 1973's *Bananamour*). In the most laconic interview conducted for this book, Ayers simply says, 'Syd Barrett was a most extraordinary person.'

The Madcap Laughs was released on 3 January 1970. Syd remarked, 'I liked what came out, only it was released far too long after it was done. I wanted it to be a whole thing that people would listen to all the way through, with everything related and balanced, the tempos and moods offsetting each other, and I hope that's what it sounds like. I've got it at home, but I don't listen to it much now.

‘I always find recording difficult. I can only think in terms of, well, “I’m pleased with forty minutes of sound,” but I can’t in terms of the music industry. It’s only a beginning, I’ve written a lot more stuff.

‘*The Madcap Laughs* is my particular idea of a record. It’s very together. There’s a lot of speaking on it, but there’s not a very recognisable mood. It’s mainly acoustic guitar and there are no [extra] instruments at all.’

Barrett seemed pleased with the album overall, saying, ‘*Madcap* was pretty good; like a painting as big as the cellar.’ Hipgnosis contributed collages for the inner sleeve, repeating images of Syd across cloudbanks like a comet, his head inside a television. Malcolm Jones explained, ‘*The Madcap Laughs* had taken over two months to mix. Syd was a bit pissed off with the delay, as I was.’

The release was delayed as EMI insisted on an advance advertising campaign designed to raise demand. *The Madcap Laughs* took eighteen months to record compared with five for *The Piper at the Gates of Dawn*. Soon after mixing, Jones took a reel-to-reel copy of the finished album to Barrett’s flat.

Barrett’s opinion of the album’s commercial potential was lukewarm. ‘Yes, it’s quite nice, but I’d be very surprised if it did anything if I were to drop dead. I don’t think it would stand to be accepted as my last statement. I want to record my next LP before I go on to anything else, and I’m writing for that at the moment. I’m just waiting to see how the records do, what the reactions are, before I decide on anything else.’

The Madcap Laughs sold well among the underground and university markets, reaching Number 40 in the charts, selling over six thousand copies in a few months. Reviews were positive. Barry Miles, in *International Times*, wrote: ‘Opening track “Terrapin” immediately flashes one back to days of “Arnold Layne”, UFO and the Marquee on Sunday afternoon’s Underground Club. The Pink Floyd in their early days and that same quivering, quavering voice like a mist, drifting over notes like a ghostly vapour of consciousness, occasionally dripping a substance and causing an oddly low note, so characteristic of Syd’s singing, again here on “No Good Trying”.

‘It’s really good to have a whole album of Syd’s songs, that’s what a label like Harvest is for. Musically Syd hasn’t developed as much as the

Pink Floyd, but one shouldn't look for change for the sake of change. Syd's music is like this and it's very good like this. If you go for spaced-out music then listen carefully to "Dark Globe" – an acoustic masterpiece. My favourite track is "Here I Go", a snappy little number, good for finger poppin', a sad little love story but with a happy ending, as the rejected pop singer discovers that his girl's sister likes him and they make it ever after. Good cut for Radio Two, if they only knew. Syd's not tight; in fact, he's pretty loose with it. This is what's been happening in Syd's head for the last two years. You owe it to him to give it a spin. Who knows, you might have been thinking the very same things.'

The underground now had far wider reach. Pink Floyd and Soft Machine had trailblazed a tour circuit through universities and polytechnics across Britain to alternative enclaves, where before there had been nothing but Top Rank ballrooms and mod discos in pubs. Now, the underground were *Oz*-reading, dope-smoking, 'unwashed and slightly dazed' hippies from Land's End at the tip of Cornwall to the northern end of Scotland at John O'Groats, who travelled to free festivals in muddy fields.

What seemed revolutionary in 1966 was widespread by the decade's end. Most large provincial towns had an arts lab, communal flat or dope dealer's digs where the underground held sway in much expanded – if much diluted – form. Underground groups like the Pink Fairies (ex-members of UFO regulars the Social Deviants) and Hawkwind defined hard-edged space rock underground. Raw realities pushed whimsy and fairytales into aggressive sci-fi rock.

London's nightlife had also changed. Middle Earth was chased away from Covent Garden, and like UFO, moved to the Roundhouse before imploding in 1969. Jeff Dexter's Implosion concerts at the Roundhouse met with more success. The Lyceum Ballroom, a one-time mod dance palace, now hosted Curved Air and the Nice, where buckskin-clad hippies stood wired on speed and dope in the incongruous velvet-and-brass room.

Streets away, at the former Flamingo Club in Wardour Street, the bleak Temple opened in November 1969. Frenetic lightshows interspersed with soft-porn slides and pounding strobes lit the basement in flashes. DJs played the Rolling Stones' gruesome 'Midnight Rambler'

at blitzkrieg volume while speed freaks shot Methedrine in the toilets. Maniacal dancers grooved to live performances by Pete Brown's Piblokto, Queen, or Thin Lizzy. Reputed gangland owners paid off Soho police and the club lasted two dismal years.

'I spent a year relaxing, and another getting the LP together,' explained Syd. 'It's been very slow, like looking back over a long time and playing very little. When I went, I felt the progress the group could have made. But it made none, none at all, except in the sense that it was continuing. To make my album was a challenge, as I didn't have anything to follow. There's much more interesting things happening right now. There's quite a sense of freedom in doing it as well.'

Barrett declared that getting another group together was 'the most interesting thing to do now, to see whether it would have been possible to retain the "See Emily Play" sort of things that were there and on maybe two tracks of the first album'.

In an interview with *NME*'s Richard Green, Syd stated: 'I've got a lot of ideas I want to explore later. Making my album was fine because after two years away from the group I didn't have to lead on from anything. I want to discover now if it's possible to continue some of the ideas that came from a couple of tracks on the first album.' Barrett sought to expand on the short, narrative songs from *Piper* such as 'The Scarecrow' and 'Flaming'. Images of nature and wild animals figure heavily, as if he was trying to reconnect with the natural world that first inspired him. Barrett mentioned 'Arnold Layne' as a 'very clear song', where word images carried moods beyond their literal meanings.

Syd commented that his lyrics were 'very important; I think it's good if a song has more than one meaning. Maybe that kind of song can reach far more people – that's nice. On the other hand, I like songs that are simple. I liked "Arnold Layne" because to me it was a very clear song. It would be terrific to do much more mood stuff. They're very pure, you know, the words.'

Interviewer Steve Turner noted, 'His songs, like paintings, were used essentially to convey a mood. Throughout the interview he spoke of "relating to a mood" when referring to his work.'

Barrett stressed the sense of his songs as ‘moods’, much as Brian Wilson of the Beach Boys composed short piano segments, which he called ‘feels’. Moods, to Barrett, stemmed from words. These contemporaries infused their songs with emotional resonance, mirroring their state of mind during composition. Each watched mood pieces become more fragmented, unable to be joined together. Whereas Wilson’s rhythmic patterns generated songs, Barrett collated ‘moods’ through words. The rhythm of Syd’s words dictated his harmonic construction, with melodic rhythmic riffs and chromatic descending melodic lines serving as handmaidens.

In January 1970, Barrett appeared interested in pursuing new musical goals. ‘I’ve certainly not been bored and there are still a lot of things to do,’ he told *Melody Maker*’s Chris Welch. ‘I’ve been writing consistently for two years now and I have lots of undeveloped things lying around. I’m still basically like I’ve always been, sitting round with an acoustic getting it done. I never get worried about my writing. My time has been fairly well spent since leaving. I haven’t had a particularly hard time and I was okay for money. I’ve heard of a few plans for me to do some appearances but there is nothing positive enough to talk about. There are vague ideas about a group as well.’

On 24 February, David Gilmour (bass), Pink Floyd road manager Alan Stiles (guitar) and Jerry Shirley (bongos), joined Syd on a radio session for John Peel’s *Top Gear*. The trio played ‘Terrapin’ before launching into four new songs, ‘Gigolo Aunt’, ‘Baby Lemonade’, ‘Effervescing Elephant’, and Rick Wright’s ‘Two of a Kind’.

Syd, David Gilmour and Jerry Shirley playing ‘Terrapin’ is the nearest approximation we have of Syd and David sitting in an empty classroom during lunch breaks at Cambridge Tech, playing guitars together and going through Stones numbers. In David Parker’s *Random Precision*, the session’s producers recalled having no verbal contact with Barrett. In answer to whatever technical questions needed to be addressed, Syd whispered to Gilmour, who then relayed instructions to the engineers. Implicit in this is the trust Barrett had in his old chum, though also how removed from day-to-day reality he had become. Although they went

through many takes, Gilmour's presence balanced Barrett's unsteady rhythms. These radio renditions are among Barrett's most coherent.

On 'Baby Lemonade', Syd's voice recaptures the sweetness of happier days. A competent reading of 'Dominoes' with Barrett and Gilmour exchanging an open-G-tuned Delta blues followed. 'Gigolo Aunt' has a creaky, rollicking joy. Gilmour stated that the time pressure helped Barrett, forcing him to get the task done. In the past, a lack of clear-cut goals might have exacerbated his indecision. Over the next year, Gilmour invested considerable time and energy on the second Barrett album. Produced by Gilmour with input from Rick Wright, work began on 26 February with 'Baby Lemonade'.

Like a spiralling kinetic painting made from silvery threads of blues colliding with spaced-out folk, a scintillating and sinuous solo guitar lead by Barrett (not Gilmour, as often stated) shows ample 'togetherness'. First, he outlines his box-chord blues, then spirals into a chromatic descending jangle derived from folk and the Byrds. In one of the most riveting Syd Barrett moments of all, Gilmour and the engineer simply happened to capture him warming up on tape, and tacked it onto the album as an intro.

In the song proper, Gilmour shadows Barrett on twelve-string guitar. Barrett sets his theme and thesis from the first engrossing verses, in iambic pentameter. Iron, steel rails, stone – heavy, leaden nouns predominate. In church hymns, 'cold iron hands' belonged to death. Resignation rounds out several lines – like a sign-off on a telegram of attempted reconciliation, a haiku epistle of anxiety. The bridge's singsong rhyme and beguiling surreal imagery are shadows of the old Syd. The repeated theme across *Barrett*, of a woman grown cold and distant, coats 'Baby Lemonade' like aspic.

The throwaway 'Maisie' is cursed with a tempo reminiscent of watching honey drip from a spoon – the cursed Mandrax torpor. Barrett was having fun with clichéd twelve-bar blues, and starts laughing halfway through. An inscrutable joke, which made sense to him alone, one may have to be on downers to enjoy 'Maisie'. It features what are probably the most stoned drums in all of recorded music.

The song's influences can be traced to a few licks of Howlin' Wolf's 'Spoonful' and a scant reference to Aleister Crowley's *Moonchild*, or Sir

James Frazer's *The Golden Bough*, where brides-to-be sat on a bull's hide. The lyrics sting with an offhand indictment of a woman lying in the hall, beyond reproach, in the aftermath of a lover's quarrel. Wright played the Hammond, and Shirley contributed drums; catching Syd's dropped beats with drum rolls much like Mitch Mitchell with Jimi Hendrix.

'Doing Syd's record was interesting, but extremely difficult,' recalled Wright. 'David and Roger did *The Madcap Laughs* and David and I did the second one. By then just trying to help Syd any way we could, rather than worrying about getting the best guitar sound. You could forget about that! Going into the studio and trying to get him to sing. Both of Syd's albums are an interesting part of [his] history.'

Wright told Mark Lamarr: 'Jerry Shirley was on drums, David playing guitars and bass. A lot of hard work getting it all into time. He had all these songs, some that he'd already recorded, which we'd never done. He was still writing, though he could not communicate. He'd lost it. Inside his head, he was still thinking these great lyrics. I could never understand the fact he could come up with these great lyrics still, but everyday life was impossible for him.'

Peter Bown returned as engineer, and the change that Syd exhibited since early 1968 astonished him. His appearance at sessions alarmed the assembled crew of Gilmour, Leckie and Bown, as Barrett sometimes seemed on the verge of falling down. The sessions were closed, so chance visits by EMI officials could be averted. John Leckie, stellar producer of everyone from the Verve to the Stone Roses and Radiohead, served as tape operator.

On 27 February, Syd ran through four two-track guitar and vocal demos. 'Wolfpack' and 'Waving My Arms in the Air' turned up on the second album, though 'Living Alone' and 'Bob Dylan Blues' did not. On the session sheet for the day, Gilmour is listed as having taken a copy of the demos home. According to David Parker's *Random Precision*, he returned and took the master tapes as well.

Gilmour maintained that 'those sessions were done so quickly. We were rushing to gigs every day and had to fit recording sessions in between. I probably took it away to have a listen and simply forgot to

take it back. It wasn't intended to be a final mix. Syd knocked it off, I took the tape home.'

A perfunctory 2001 *Best of Barrett* compilation included 'Bob Dylan Blues', supplied by Gilmour. The song is performed with transparent clarity, a talking blues in waltz time. For a throwaway, 'Bob Dylan Blues' has startling wordplay, his rhythm is steady and the performance even and self-assured; an old song unencumbered by emotional weight. '"Bob Dylan Blues" is a bit of fun,' said Gilmour. 'He was quite a Dylan fan, though there was a bit of jealousy there, too. If a tribute, then a mocking one!'

Written in spring 1965, 'Bob Dylan Blues' features a shift from a G chord to C9, parodying Dylan's 'Chimes of Freedom'. Barrett's gifts at word juggling are sharp, each couplet falling together like interlocking pieces. He pilloried the infamous lyric of Dylan's 'I Shall Be Free #10', with his own variation. Gilmour told *Mojo*: 'I don't remember why we didn't put it on the album; I don't think it fitted in.'

'Living Alone' remains unreleased and unheard, most likely to be issued in twenty years time, for another cynical EMI compilation. Based upon its title alone, one suspects that 'Living Alone' would make for fascinating listening. Speculation abounds; the song might be 'Stoned Alone' from the early Pink Floyd days, or a demo of 'I Never Lied To You', which follows 'Waving My Arms in the Air' on the finished album, and which there is no session sheet for. Whether it reveals anything about Barrett's condition or shows him in an unfavourable light, the song remains a mystery.

With more time for the second album, Gilmour and Wright dedicated themselves to the work at hand. Almost forty tracks have emerged from Syd's busiest year in the studio. As sessions began, Barrett told the press: 'I'm working on the album. There's four tracks in the can already, and it should be out about September. There are no set musicians, just people helping out, like on *The Madcap Laughs*, which gives me far more freedom in what I want to do. I feel as if I've got lots of things, much better things to do still. That's why there isn't really a lot to say, I just want to get it all done. There'll be all kinds of things. It just depends what I feel like doing at the time. The important thing is that it will be better than the last.'

What others considered demos, Barrett often saw as complete. At the first album session proper, he recorded three versions of ‘Gigolo Aunt’. The song only required a few run-throughs, which Syd played perfectly until they got a take. Barrett played an inspired loose solo in raga-tinged mode that points to Paul McCartney’s lead on ‘Taxman’.

A more direct connection was Slim Harpo, the Louisiana swamp-blues master whose ‘(I’m a) King Bee’ was Pink Floyd’s first recorded effort. Syd’s treble-setting Fender Telecaster scale climbs and raunchy Louisiana Bayou tone are sublime expressions of Harpo’s influence. On ‘Gigolo Aunt’, Harpo’s spooky reverb and heavy tremolo shine through. Across *Barrett*, when Syd’s faculties lock into place, his leads and rhythm dart easily between the double guitar attack of Harpo’s Gibson rhythm, and Fender leads by New Orleans guitarist Lightnin’ Slim.

‘Gigolo Aunt’ is an inspired jam, which captures the strengths of Syd Barrett’s solo work. Benefiting from a tight bass courtesy of Gilmour, who rivalled McCartney in his skill at dancing around the root chord, and solid drumming from Shirley, Barrett turns in his best solo guitar work, traversing Harpo’s Bayou by way of the Ganges. Gilmour, rather than Wright, plays soulful arpeggios on the studio’s Hammond RT3 organ, adding to the cohesive ensemble work. ‘The objective was to get to what Syd wanted, but he was so erratic [that] rehearsing musicians was impossible,’ explained Gilmour. ‘We’d usually tape Syd first. Then build the song around him, but one or two occasions, we’d do it the other way round, and piece it together afterwards.’

On Mandrax, his rhythm, once taut and propulsive, was rendered full of holes. With some leads, Barrett recaptured his starry best. In the right frame of mind, he played brilliant and nuanced passages, though conscious effort increased his nerves. With repeated takes, he lost focus and then interest. Recording had to be spontaneous and interesting, though easy, when his errant muse could not be.

Many attempts at recording ‘Waving My Arms in the Air’ resulted in the first spontaneous take being declared the ‘best’. The quality and clarity of Syd’s output varied from session to session. Gilmour quickly realised that spontaneity worked best. With Gilmour on bass, Shirley on drums and Richard Wright on organ backing him, Syd struggled and succeeded. Editing from different takes disguised abrupt tempo changes

or muffled vocals, which Gilmour and the engineers found taxing – but necessary – work.

'We had three alternatives working with Syd,' asserted Gilmour to Nick Kent. 'One, we could work with him in the studio, playing along as he put down his tracks, almost impossible, though we succeeded on "Gigolo Aunt". The second was laying down some track before and then having him play over it. The third was him putting basic ideas down with just guitar and vocals, and then we'd make something out of it all. Mostly a case of me saying, "Well, what have you got then Syd?" and he'd search around and work something out.'

'Waving My Arms in the Air' contained unexpected shards of poetic insight. Lyrics ring like bells of devastating truth, hard-learned through harsh experience.

On the album, 'Waving My Arms in the Air' segues into 'I Never Lied to You', with a clear magisterial accompaniment on a Steinway upright piano from Rick Wright. Syd navigates chord changes with difficulty at first, though his progressions soon become supple and agile, as if Barrett is still reaching for an unattainable synthesis of mood and gesture. These marvellous songs stand the test of time, free of the 'progressive' trappings that were hijacking British rock, like Pink Floyd's *Atom Heart Mother*'s awkward marriage of orchestra and rock group.

This sublime 'Garden Trio', the third of Syd's three-song suites, which form the core of each of his albums, details an idyllic, languorous love in summertime. In 'I Never Lied to You', Barrett sings of his failed attempts to connect with another, accenting the lyrics with an F# chord and a clever melodic turnaround that uses it as a pivot point. (There is an echo of 'Mrs Robinson' by Simon & Garfunkel, in structure, chords and sentiment.)

There is some tonal ambiguity in 'I Never Lied to You', where F# acts at point of interruption in the chord sequence of A-F#-E. Syd's ever so subtle tonal ambiguities are critical in understanding his emotional colorations. This device returns later when he sings with down strokes on the beat in sudden waltz time, accenting the downbeat with the staccato phrasing of his vocal. At the end of the song, Barrett asks where he is and what he's supposed to be with the transparent honesty of someone just turned twenty-three, casting about for his lot in life.

Next door, Pink Floyd were immersed in sessions for *Atom Heart Mother*. Syd dropped into Studio Two with his old bandmate Geoff Mott in tow. (An unconfirmed rumour holds that the track 'Alan's Psychedelic Breakfast' was to have featured Syd rather than road manager Alan Styles cooking breakfast.) Syd watched his former bandmates from the sidelines, sitting on his hands in silence, as they struggled to graft a rhythm track and Ron Geesin's orchestral arrangement together. He breezed out after a few minutes, the disgraced ex-leader; an object of pity, condescension, and sorrow for having lost control.

There was little rancour on Barrett's side: he commented on *Ummagumma*. 'They've probably done very well. The singing's very good and the drumming is good as well.' Though he also smirked, 'I don't have anything to do with them. Apart from the fact that they did produce my albums, which was very useful.' Released in October 1970, *Atom Heart Mother* became Pink Floyd's first Number One album. Something of an artistic failure, nonetheless *Atom Heart Mother* showed the group consolidating a new path.

On 3 April, Barrett returned to rework 'Wolfpack' from his earlier demo. A jarring, ragged ode to a pack of wolves finds Barrett howling his vocal with unhinged glee, mirroring the strident tone of 'Scream Thy Last Scream'. Combining teenage memories of leading his Seventh Scouts Wolf Cub pack across the Fens with an allusion to a game of cards, Syd turns in abstract guitar work reminiscent of Zoot Horn Rollo from Captain Beefheart's Magic Band. Barrett later told Mick Rock that 'Wolfpack' was his personal favourite, giving a good reading of his state of mind.

'Wolfpack' marks the end of Barrett's great lyrical triumphs. From here, he starts to slip into the word-salad imagery that spelled the end of his career as a lyricist. The imagery is visceral and intriguing, under a heavy Dylan influence, though any narrative thread is as elusive as a will-o'-the-wisp. The jam at the end is heavily spaced, with Gilmour, Wright, Syd, and Shirley each playing what amounts to their own tune.

With Gilmour on tour with Pink Floyd for three months, Barrett worked diffidently on new songs. These demonstrated a steep decline in his ability to spin words, with word tangles and cut-ups replacing concise

imagery. Barrett formed word clusters, and switched often between them, though generating fewer words per cluster, with impaired fluidity.

As Duggie Fields observes, Syd's decline as a wordsmith was mirrored by his deterioration on a personal level. 'Syd could certainly change. He was volatile. But I don't think he turned on the charm on consciously. He was that naturally. Then he wasn't anymore. Though I lived with many people during that period, Syd was the only one I can remember with people pounding on the door, saying, "Syd! Let me in, Syd!" on so many occasions, with so many people doing that. He had something that made people do that. It had to do with him being good-looking, but also some quality he could manifest. Then he could also be so dead, just not there. I can remember going out with him and leading him around as if a child. He wouldn't make any contribution outside himself, which was not comfortable.

'We got this flat because he was pleasurable to be with, but after a while it became a nightmare. I realised I would rather not be living with this person anymore. I don't remember how long this transition took but he didn't have those problems when I first lived with him at Cromwell Road. He didn't have them when we first got the flat. They developed. Maybe he had symptoms of them, which one didn't register, but then did because I was seeing him every day. He wasn't like that at first, he functioned and then he became a dysfunctional person. I had other friends who disintegrated. Syd's wasn't the most dramatic disintegration, or even the most visible disintegration. His paranoid outbreaks and confusions weren't as marked as other people's.'

Arriving somewhat the worse for the wear at Abbey Road on 5 June, Barrett cut demos of 'Rats', 'Wined and Dined' and 'Birdie Hop'. Duggie Fields says, 'I went to the studio with Syd, so dysfunctional and literally sat there, not knowing what he was doing. Forgot what he was supposed to be singing, was not focused at all.' Fields recalled that Barrett fell off his stool at one point.

'Birdie Hop' is notable for the repeated line that closes each verse like an ill omen, though only because his melodies seem arrested, his verses static. One line noticeably recalls, '*Hop about, pretty sparrows, and pick up the hay*,' from the 1806 *Rhymes for the Nursery*. Barrett plays high on

the neck of his guitar, like a mandolin. Despite extensive vamping, chromatic harmonic structure, and melodic phrasing in major key, the song flounders.

The rant of 'Rats' saw Syd in spiteful mode, spitting about an absence of love and declaring his familiarity with the feeling. A strident acoustic demo, the song showed that Syd's once-holistic vision of nature was now far from bucolic, with wolves, rats and flies taking over from benign creatures. There are overtones of the Piper leading the rats out the eastern gate of Hamelin.

'Rats' is a nasty little tune, with inferences some have taken to refer to heroin, though Syd was singing about archery. (American Indians used bow strings made of sinew, and cord from the necks of snapping turtles.) A closer stylistic signpost would be Samuel Beckett's play *Endgame*, from which the dismissive line about love is sourced.

The following day, backed by Gilmour and Shirley, Syd played live on the last day of the Extravaganza '70 Music and Fashion Festival at the Olympia in London. He referred to the festival in interviews as 'this Wembley thing'. Asked about a return to live performance, Barrett admitted it 'would be nice. I used to enjoy it, it was a gas, but so is doing nothing. It's art-school laziness, really. I've got this Wembley gig and then another thing in summer. I'll be getting something together for the Wembley thing and then just see what happens.'

The 'Wembley thing' was an initiative by organisers of an odd music and fashion festival at the Olympia Exhibition Hall. Through Bryan Morrison, who organised and promoted the festival, there was pressure on Syd to play. Bo Diddley and many others were on the bill. Also playing that night was Syd's mate Meic Stevens.

Nervous, Syd had not performed live since the pier in Hastings. He was plagued by indecision to the last moment. 'He was going to do it, he wasn't going to do it. Finally we said, "Look, Syd, come on, man, you can do it!"' Jerry Shirley recalled.

The trio took the stage, scene of Syd's last big stand with his old group. Shirley played drums, Gilmour, bass, and the impromptu group performed 'Terrapin', 'Gigolo Aunt', 'Effervescing Elephant' and 'Octopus'. Plagued by inaudible vocals, someone from the audience shouted, 'We can't hear your voice!' Syd was having difficulties making

himself understood in day-to-day life, and once again he was onstage shouting. By 'Octopus', the mixing board problems were solved. Barrett's voice breaks through, like a record leaping out of static on Radio Luxembourg. The trio sound fantastic.

'It got good,' said Shirley, 'and then after "Octopus" Syd said, "Oh great, thanks very much," and walked off! We tried, you know.' Shirley did a hurried drum roll to disguise Barrett's sudden exit. Gilmour said, 'We'd rehearsed four or five songs. We did what we'd planned to do. Did he walk offstage? Nothing would surprise me with Syd. If he did finish abruptly and take his guitar off, then I would have taken mine off.'

Shirley recounted to director John Edginton: 'There was a lot of anticipation, "First sighting of Syd! Live performance by Syd Barrett!" We got to the third number. Syd stopped and walked off. It wasn't one of those, "I'm a rock star who's walking offstage!" and throws his guitar down in a moment of drama. It wasn't remotely fashionable. All he did was literally stop. Syd took his guitar, put it down and gently and quietly walked offstage. David and I came to a slow and embarrassing end and walked off.' It would be Barrett's last London show, if his tenuous resolve had been shaken, no one knew.

Barrett and Gilmour returned to EMI the next day to record 'Milky Way'. Unreleased for sixteen years, its clever wordplay was rife with humour, vocal tricks, and novel melodic twists. Even in throwaway performance, 'Milky Way' is compelling. What comes through in banjo-like strums is the song's music-hall feel, though the track also illustrates Barrett struggling to keep good time, hit notes, and infuse the song with feeling.

'Milky Way' has a tuneful melody, and the bare version included on *Opel* displays the unfulfilled potential of these demos. With Gilmour behind the console, Syd sat on a stool trying to recapture the fluency and clarity of songs played at Mill Pond or garden parties in Cambridge not so long before. Syd sings, with palpable sadness, of his inability to smile as he once did. His Mandrax-saturated vocal wobbles as he struggles for words, mangling them.

Barrett's voice comes through unsteadily, his timing uneven. In a sense, the time-and-space-distorting effects of drugs had become permanent. At times Barrett is unable to preserve either consistent rhythm

or melody. His once excellent sense of timing became skewed to the extent that other musicians struggled to play with him. Drummers accompanying Syd on these albums had to anticipate his erratic tempos. Syd skipped over chord changes and tempos, often frustrating himself. Kris DiLorenzo noted: 'Barrett's rhythms were usually unpredictable; one never knew what process in Syd's brain dictated when to speed up or slow down the pace.'

Tempo was in perpetual flux, with Barrett's guitar ticking along to an off-kilter metronome. Gilmour explained, 'If we played a track with Syd playing along and singing, he would go in to changes and choruses in all different places. We were not sharp enough to stick with him all the time.'

The slow diminution of fluidity in Barrett's guitar playing, regressing in technical finesse to his 'Lucy Leave' level, is punctuated by rare, stellar bursts. When coherent, these songs shine on par with his best Floyd work. When David Gilmour lamented at the lost potential, he could have not realised how such bare and ragged songs prefigured a generation of music, creeping along similar dark musical cupboards, looking for a way out. *The Madcap Laughs* had a strong influence on a flood of dark folk music in the early seventies, dredging the darkness of Albion, from the Trees, to Comus, and the masterful Trader Horne. From there, the thread extends to David Tibet's Current 93 and Psychic TV.

Next came '(She Was a) Millionaire', which dated back to Floyd's All Saints shows. An April 1967 studio version was unfinished and perhaps erased. The ninety-second instrumental fragment of 'No Title' might be the same song. Here, re-titled 'Millionaire', two attempts to create a backing track were abandoned before Barrett added vocals. David Parker confirms that this was not 'One in a Million', performed live in 1967, and further noted similarities between 'Millionaire' and 'Opel'. In despair, Gilmour cut his losses, laying overdubs over the ragged acoustic demo of 'Rats'.

At a loss as to how to structure the song, Gilmour, Shirley, and Wright jammed instead. Songs like 'Rats' were new, sung from lyrics Barrett worked out at his hidey-hole in Wetherby Mansions. Jerry Shirley said, '"Rats" was odd, a crazed jam. Syd had this lyric he shouted over the

top.' The jam acted as purgative for all concerned. An insight for Gilmour into Barrett's chaotic *modus operandi*.

When the group reassembled on 14 July, a breakthrough occurred. 'Dominoes' hints at what Pink Floyd might have sounded like had Barrett stayed, an uneasy symbiosis. Gilmour, Wright and Barrett struggled through three takes with minor scale shifts. 'We put down the track for "Dominoes",' recalled Gilmour. 'The guitar, which we tried to do several times, didn't work. After we tried it for God knows how long, he suggested we turn the tape over. Somehow, he could divine what was going on. A very difficult thing to do, if you've listened to a tape backwards. He did one take with the tape running backwards. We turned it over and it immediately seemed to fit perfectly. That one's on the record. We never had to do it again. It still seems mind-boggling.' When Barrett was inspired, his Byzantine mental faculties clicked into extraordinary action. Syd could lay down flawless guitar solos, even backwards. 'The backwards guitar sounded great, best lead he ever played,' Shirley enthused. 'First time out and he didn't put a note wrong.'

Gilmour saw that working in elliptical orbits with Barrett proved more productive than getting him to play in synchronous alignment. 'The song ended after Syd finished singing and I wanted a gradual fade so I added that section.' Gilmour added free-rolling drums to underpin the song, playing a serviceable blues shuffle in the style of Nick Mason. Rick Wright leans in on Hammond organ and electric piano, with inspired right-hand fills reminiscent of the Doors' 'Riders on the Storm'. The 'Dominoes' melody line and the song's use of the phrase '*you and I*' points to the Turtles' pop tune 'Happy Together', a big hit in March 1967, suggesting the song was a fragment dating from the tail end of Syd's time at Earlham, playing games of Go and dominoes with Lindsay.

'Dominoes' ambles along in a stoned tempo, which evokes Sunday afternoons at home with newspapers sprawled on the floor, tea and joint in hand. Stellar backwards guitar and minor scale shifts aside, the song drags along in the Mandrax-shuffle that pervades several tracks on *Barrett*. The lyrics are exquisite, rich with imagery of games of dominoes on warm summer afternoons as rain clouds gather. 'Dominoes' may also refer to masque ball costumes, echoing masks and disguises on *The Madcap Laughs*.

Syd perked up. Overdubs on the exquisite ‘Wined and Dined’ followed, with Gilmour dubbing all instruments atop Barrett’s demo. Syd sings an ode to late-summer garden parties in a haunting, plaintive vocal, capturing the atmosphere of England’s finest season, using languorous sentiment to suggest love in bloom. Though Gilmour was adamant Syd should play every lead, here he adds a sinuous slide lead, in a graceful and evocative flurry of notes full of precision and twang. Gilmour had Barrett play every lead bar one on the album, backing him on twelve-string acoustic rhythm guitar or bass when needed.

Despite Geoff Mott’s claim that he’d seen Syd write the song days before, Lindsay Corner told Kris DiLorenzo that ‘Wined and Dined’ dated from the Cambridge days, when she recalled Syd as a ‘beautiful, happy, together’ young man. Here, ‘Wined and Dined’ has an undertow of sadness, sung in the most fragile of voices, lingering in twilight at an August garden party he never wanted to leave.

Syd’s creative gifts came from a deep fount, cultivated according to his own meter and styling. His tuning, voicing and phrasing are his own, unoccluded by obvious technique. A gift compromised by three-minute commercial pop ditties. The perfect solo is not measured by how many notes are played or how fast, but rather in its ephemeral channelling of feeling. If music’s highest expression is the successful transmission of thought and feeling from player to listener, then Barrett succeeds. Far more to do with instinct than technical skill, flaws or fluffed notes do not detract from its beauty; indeed, may add to them. Even in his mistakes, Barrett, full of feeling, displays a keen, almost unbearable awareness.

‘Effervescing Elephant’ was an early song from 1964, which Lindsay Corner remembered as ‘one of Syd’s party pieces’. Taking cues from Hilaire Belloc’s *The Bad Child’s Book of Beasts* and *More Beasts for Worse Children*, black humour pervades this wisp of a song, clocking in at just over a minute. Other sources were 1899’s *The Red Book of Animal Stories* by Andrew Lang, with its tales of bison, buffalo, hippos and tigers, ‘Waltzing Matilda’ by Frank Ifield, and Edward Lear’s limerick quintet rhymes.

Barrett conjures a menagerie of a bison, a tiny-eyed elephant and a prowling tiger. The twist ending is pure Belloc, with a punch line warning against the pitfalls of pride, highlighting how playful Barrett

could be. Nine tries at a master take illustrated Syd's difficulty in infusing even this basic track with the requisite feeling. An alternate take on *Opel* shows his distinct lack of emotion and difficulty in adhering to tempo.

Gilmour brought in session tuba player Vic Saywell to add an overdub. On learning the name of the tune, Saywell played 'L'Éléphant', fifth movement of classical composer Saint-Saëns *Le Carnaval des Animaux* suite. A fitting closer for the album, in 'Effervescing Elephant' there is a sparkle of the lad from Cambridge who delighted his friends with songs conjured on the go.

On 14 July, after a break from 'Wined and Dined', Syd introduced his next song with an introduction every bit as abstracted as the track itself. Looking toward the control room, Barrett told Gilmour and Bown, '"Dolly Rocker"… it's called "Dolly Rocker". It's an old make of dress; well, months old, you know… that sort of thing.'

Singing through a fog of downers, the throwaway 'Dolly Rocker' sounds like an outline for an upbeat pop number, though remained a sketch unreleased until *Opel*, and with good reason. The chords and lyrics sound ad-libbed save for a sharp fragmentary verse, sung in the manner of childhood number songs. That there was indeed a line of boutique frocks called 'Dolly Rocker' seems a wholly arbitrary association.

Barrett displays almost every characteristic of thought disorder in speech and song. Like a ghastly version of comedians Peter Cook and Dudley Moore's famed 'Pete'n'Dud' routines, conversations between Gilmour in the control room and Syd in the studio read like case studies:

> Gilmour: What's this one called Syd?
>
> Syd: This one's called… well I suppose it's called 'Rats' at the moment. I don't really dig the animals, it's irrelevant… animals. My own fetish.

In Syd's last lyrics, we have instance after instance of echolalia, reverberating echoes; clangs, where sounds, rather than meaning, govern words; and the persistent repetition of certain words.

With pressured and distractible speech, Syd switched midstream in response to fleeting stimulus. His tangential, oblique replies, with constant self-reference, suggest not incoherence; rather hinting at the derailed loose associations of so-called 'knight's move' thinking. Syd's ideas slip off the rails with obliquely related metaphors. His lexical train is constantly blocked or interrupted before reaching the station. His semantic paraphasia, or substitution of inappropriate words, are often dazzlingly imaginative. Likewise his phonemic paraphasia, or mispronunciation, with syllables out of sequence.

Such 'faults' often make for great poetry. Subtle manifestations of what could be termed psychotic speech form the bedrock for poetic invention throughout the ages. Indeed, clinically psychotic writings are at times a stone's throw from contemporary poetry. Awareness, or lack thereof, is the key in separating psychotic language from poetry.

Again, as in madness relative to genius, one is haphazard and the other volitional. Inhibitory deficits rather than context detection deficits underlie the tangles found in Syd's final songs. That said, Barrett was exercising still formidable gifts of poetic invention. From noble antecedents such as Lewis Carroll's 1872 *Jabberwocky* and Edward Lear's 1888 *Book of Limericks*, Barrett displayed undoubted gifts at juggling wordplay, even at his most random.

Syd dips into his formidable extant vocabulary at will, but is often unable to string words into clear sentences. Barrett's dilemma was syntactical, assigning meaning, as much as semantic, specifying correct word order and inflectional structure. Rather than the markedly reduced idea density of schizophrenia, Syd's ambiguous utterances and exophoric references point to a deep welling internal dialogue. Extensive textual and semantic analysis of Barrett's lyrics, comparing the length, frequency, and dispersion of unique word forms, reveal an integral parity in word pairs pointing to a chain of ideas – which spurred Barrett on while writing – and implicit psychological aspects.

Syd's moods, behaviour and lyrics point to complex partial seizures rather than schizophrenia. Drugs, stress, electrical shocks and flashing lights all appear to have aggravated Syd's disposition to these seizures. Doctor Richard Restak comments: 'In contrast to psychotic persons, patients remained fully aware altered interpretation was an illusion. A

friend's voice might sound remote, or well-known rooms appear unfamiliar, but meaning is preserved. The voice does not become depersonalised, nor does the room lose its identity.'

Some songs were written during Syd's songwriting peak in Earlham and others during his brief idyll with Gala in the first weeks of their relationship. Whereas Syd's Pink Floyd work is rarely self-referential, his solo works are rife with an idyllic time in the near past when love bloomed. His narrative becomes first person and specific. Songs issued not from notebooks of ideas, but his day-to-day existence. 'Syd always had lots of girls around him but I don't think he was always happy in his relationships with women,' observed Mick Rock. 'He never seemed to work it out.'

The languorous contentment of 'Love Song' is undercut by the sadness of its vocal. The track features bass, harmonium, Syd's voice and jangling guitar, with Gilmour and Wright embellishing a song with no obvious chorus; its repeated refrains rounded out by Wright's harmonium and celeste for a toy-town psych feel.

The mood becomes tense when Barrett runs through 'Let's Split', as he grows nervous and unsure of his performance. After breaking off halfway through and starting anew, Syd loses his thread. He curtly tells Gilmour, 'Hold it, can you? That's all, cheers!' And that is the end of 'Let's Split', which was held off the final album, despite its priceless whistling solo.

Songs like 'Let's Split' marked clear semantic disintegration. What Louis Sass, in *Madness and Modernism*, called: 'Discourse led at least as much by rhyme and alliteration as by any overarching theme or meaning.' '*Down*' is parried with '*out*' in obsessive clanging patterns. Words are scattered at his feet and floating around him, like the scarecrow's straw. Measuring word dispersion, or how close to each other word forms are in the song (smaller dispersion points to shorter distance between cases), there is massive disparity between '*down*' and '*out*'.

Literally trying to hold words to the ground, it was small wonder Syd wanted to split. The other prominent word pair is '*you*' and '*everything*', though dispersion between word forms rather than words indicates the real subtext in 'Let's Split' is '*everything*' has '*split*'.

‘Let’s Split’ is one tenth as complex as ‘See Emily Play’, with half as many distinct words, and far less lexical density. Mark Paytress aptly called ‘Love Song’ how it felt to be Syd in 1970.

In ‘Word Song’, a one-take track recorded on 21 July, Barrett decisively dissolves artifice, and takes us directly into his sea of words that flit about like fireflies, leaving us to make connections as we see fit. Less a song, and more a spoken-word piece, ‘Word Song’ is words for effect. Stripped of narrative thread, the track has a devastating modernity. A startling catalogue of words, an assemble-your-own Syd Barrett song with words culled from stray readings sieved through the subconscious.

Barrett critic P.R. Lee insists: ‘Dadaist poetry would have been quite popular in Syd’s days. I’m not convinced lexical disintegration is obvious in these lyrics. A poet loves language and so he plays with it and its rules. He/she exploits connections, which seem unusual in everyday usage but create a new world in an art context. Why else would Syd have written “Word Song”? He wanted to break every rule in the book, as many had done before him.’

Fields recalled Barrett using Brion Gysin and William Burroughs’s cut-up technique, sitting in his room cutting texts and reassembling them. Burroughs wrote: ‘A cut-up is a juxtaposition of what’s happening outside, and what you’re thinking of.’ Like a flashback in films, ‘enabling the writer to move backwards and forwards in his time track’.

Culled from the indices of technical dictionaries, words in ‘Word Song’ were chosen for their onomatopoetic value, less for their meanings. Metallurgy, geography, science and vegetables figure heavily, as Barrett’s distracted eye was drawn to word-images connoting solidity, in contrast to his ephemeral free-floating consciousness. Gold, lead, neon, silver, tin, and copper whirl through the hypnotic whispered lines, testament, if nothing else, to the fascination words and relative sound images retained for Syd. Also to their scattered, buried and occluded provenance. He mined his own mental hoard for words, which glitter like gold dust, turning into echoes of echoes – the purest abstraction of all.

Barrett returned to the Burroughs/Gysin cut-up technique, trying to reconnect with the spark that spliced one thought to another, the connective linguistic glue come undone. Cracks and fissures formed. Songs like ‘Word Song’ and ‘Birdie Hop’, with sharp coherent lines

sprinkled amid a choking sea of verbiage culled at random and put together without much structure, not onomatopoeias, not allusions, not alliterations, nor referencing poetic forms, nor paying much heed to meter, line lengths, measures or rhythm. Whether modernist poetic triumph or utter lexical derailment is a decision best left to the listener.

In true disintegration, words were thrown together because they looked good on paper, though the associations were random. No longer was this evocative of Edward Lear or Lewis Carroll's elaborate 'nonsense' or Joycean prose-pictures, but clangourous mishmashes, which fail to gel into those startling lines where Barrett brought the oblique into ultra-sharp focus.

On 18 July, on a bill full of Blackhill Enterprises groups, Pink Floyd headlined at a free concert in Hyde Park on a hot summer's day, with one hundred and twenty thousand in attendance. The Floyd launched 'Atom Heart Mother' with a brass section and choir. In contrast, 21-22 July marked the end of Syd's active recording career. The second phase of his work, which opened with 'Scream Thy Last Scream', spiralled to a close.

Syd rallied for one last hurrah, pooling his resources to end on a high note. Though his voice has a telltale tremble throughout, his guitar playing is rhythmic and tasty, if simple. Save for one last abortive record four years later, his recording career ended with five full versions of 'It Is Obvious', each in different key, tempo and style.

Often overlooked, 'It Is Obvious' (or 'Mind Shot', as Barrett called it on his lyric sheet), contains some of Barrett's clearest stylistic signposts. From the Old English mannerisms of key lyrics to the concise description of the quarry outside Cambridge, the track sparkles with imagery, rich in metaphor. Recall of place in Barrett's work is rarely site specific, and acts as a signifier for feeling occasioned by its recall.

An exquisite gem, its underlying theme concerns a couple stranded together, no doubt intentionally. Walking together and talking, their minds shoot onto a different plane. 'It Is Obvious' is redolent of the Cambridge countryside – brambles, spikes, trees, cornfields and clouds – Syd's nostalgia for home coming through strong. Here, we find some of his most realised forms: introduction, signifier, place memory, feeling –

all collated to engineer a John Clare-like parrying of place, memory and feeling to create a three-dimensional construct in song.

Excepting 'Octopus', Barrett's solo albums have far fewer direct antecedents in literature and fairytales than did *The Piper at the Gates of Dawn*. Barrett's cosmology, and dialogue, was now wholly internal. The scattered pages of his inspiration were thrown to the winds in defiance, and surrender to the all-powerful word.

Barrett benefits from better vocal performances on songs where Syd's voice was double tracked, and comes through clear and strong. His voice does not tremble or break as on *The Madcap Laughs*, though Gilmour often cut and pasted from different takes for a convincing vocal. A more relaxed recording schedule and Gilmour's structured production aided Syd. Kris DiLorenzo noted: '*Barrett*, despite its more intimate framework, captured talent in disintegration.'

For many, though, *Barrett* is the highlight of Syd's work, the point where he exits his dark globe into sun-kissed, melodious sonic delights. Robyn Hitchcock praised the album, telling John Edginton: 'It wasn't until *Barrett* that it all seemed so real, Syd was absolutely speaking to me.'

'It was hell, but we always felt there was a talent there,' observed Gilmour. 'A matter of trying to get it out on to record so people would hear it. Syd didn't make that any easier for us. Various techniques we had to invent to get the stuff recorded – difficult, and not rewarding. I've no idea how Syd felt about it, if [the albums] were how he wanted them to be.

'As he didn't offer opinions, we had to decide how it should be, quite normal with producers. We weren't trying to assert that on him. There wasn't anything coming from him to tell us how he thought it should be.

'He spoke on a different plane. I didn't understand what he was saying ninety percent of the time, though it always sounded like what he was saying made sense. A case of me trying to work out what I thought he wanted, then trying to make that happen. If I guessed wrong then I got it wrong, hard to tell.'

Syd's flattened emotions, and seeming indifference, made it difficult to ascertain whether he was pleased with *Barrett*. 'The only thing he ever said was at the end of the second album, when we'd finished,' recalled

Gilmour. ‘Going up the lift in his block of flats in Earls Court, he turned round to me and said, “Thanks, thanks very much.” The only expression of approval or disapproval I got out of him through two albums.’ *Barrett* was released on 14 November 1970.

With his work on the album complete, as Gilmour mixed, Barrett was not compelled to do much. Syd made plans to appear as feature artist for Kevin Ayers and the Whole World’s appearance at radio station VPRO’s Piknik Festival in the Netherlands on 30 July. Though billed on the poster, Syd did not show. The festival would have been an ideal place for him to play, sandwiched amid Frank Zappa, Traffic, Ayers, Dr John and Tyrannosaurus Rex. There was ample opportunity here for Barrett to have revitalised his reputation on a truly progressive festival circuit, though career moves seemed an anathema to him.

At home, Barrett grew tired of the chaos that dogged his steps. Gala left to return to Ely. Duggie Fields recalls a steady stream of visitors. ‘Some visitors were parasites and some were confused in their drug use, not even abusing drugs.’

Life at home edged further toward the chaotic when Rusty and Gretta moved in. The couple liked a good drink, and at some point discovered Mandrax, but the pair were not the terrible people they have been painted as. Margaretta ‘Gretta’ Barclay told Felix Atagong, ‘Syd was a very dear friend of ours, a highly sensitive, almost delicate person, who was well aware of his constitution where drugs were concerned and perfectly capable of not being cajoled into anything he did not want to do. To my knowledge, he did not take vast quantities of drugs. Syd was an intelligent, finely tuned artist and extremely sensitive artist who could not stand the pressure of the attention his unique talents attracted.

‘If he locked himself in his room for days on end, he was entitled to do so – he certainly was not mad – he did it to preserve his ‘genius sanity’ and maybe that is why the album is titled *The Madcap Laughs*.’

‘They were in my life to a degree but I didn’t want them around,’ explains Fields. ‘Gretta did a lot of speed and was manic, though with charm. We had problems discouraging them from coming around. Syd would let them in. Then they were here. How could we get rid of them? Dramas with them screaming from the street to be let in, in the middle of

the night. Overdosing in the hallway and having to be taken to hospital. They probably brought stimulants for Syd and he took them. I could have done the same and I didn't. I never liked speed; I thought it was a problem. He could have said no.'

Two flatmates turned to four, three of whom did not work and sat around all day with even more friends who came to visit. There was a fashion underground to have dogs, so the flat filled with woe-begotten hounds, too. Soon, it felt like a zoo or sociological experiment.

By the end of sessions for *Barrett*, Syd had had enough and returned to Cambridge and Gala. Barrett was twenty-four and looking homeward. Chapter 24 of *I-Ching* symbolises turning back, or returning to the safety and comfort of one's home or village. In his turn, Barrett sought to return to an idyllic Cambridge, which existed in his imagination alone. Putting weasels and stoats behind him, he left the wild wood and returned to the riverbank. Cambridge was the riverbank, home, security, and a simpler life. London, and the wreckage of the underground, was a wild wood of panic and pressure, blinding lights and excess motion. The thrill of adventure that drove him when he first set out to London had faded.

In the back of Syd's mind was an idyllic Cambridge, where his mother awaited him at Hills Road with uncritical, welcoming arms. He would return, the front door opening as he came up the walkway, the dim light in the hall illuminating Winifred standing in gathering darkness as night fell. Retreat might have seemed the last bridge to sanity. However, Cambridge, like Barrett, had changed.

14. THE RETURN OF ULYSSES

'Turning away from the confusion of external things, turning back to one's inner light, there in the depths of the soul, one sees the Divine, the One. It is indeed only germinal, no more than a beginning. To know this One means to know oneself in relation to the cosmic forces. For this One is the ascending force of life in nature and in man.'

I Ching: Book of Changes
Chapter 24: Fû/Return
Richard Wilhelm, translator, 1950

'Failure to attain the appointed goal brings them into the dark side of the moon.'

Moonchild: A Prologue
Aleister Crowley, 1929

The Syd Barrett story became a modern-day myth, and half the lies you hear aren't true. The end of the sixties brought about great changes in the lives of those who defined the era. The individuals who played front centre in the heady tumult of dreams (most illusory, some realised) were leagues from where they had begun at the decade's dawn.

In a wide-open era without boundaries, the pitfalls of excess were invisible, and inevitable. Death scythed down many promising lives. Wreckage also came through burnouts, failures and retreats. The peace and love ethos died at Altamont Speedway in California, where the Hells Angels motorcycle gang stabbed an eighteen-year-old black spectator to death. The Manson Family murders proved that neither long hair, nor passing the acid test, guaranteed a free mind.

Popular lore has it that the great hippy unwashed reached their apotheosis at Woodstock and met their nadir at Altamont. Truth often lies

buried at the crux of fact, fallacy and fiction. The sixties didn't end as such, with larger festivals, more drugs and more hippies than ever. The fun faded as business-minded 'bread heads' stepped in to make a fast buck.

At the Isle of Wight Festival in August 1970, unrest marred the swansong of the English sixties. Dust clouds hovered over the stage as ticketless thousands perched on 'Desolation Hill' overlooking the main grounds. Bad vibes prevailed, as ticketless freaks tried to break metal fences down. Joni Mitchell's glib pronouncements from the stage ('What do you want to do – start a war?') merited a few poorly aimed beer cans. Radicals erected an inflatable tent outside the gates and a heavily tripping Hawkwind played a blistering set as the tent kept deflating. Afterwards, band members could not find a drink untainted by LSD.

The festival was the largest in history. A crowd of five hundred thousand came to see the Doors, Jimi Hendrix, the Who and dozens more over three days. The event grew from the ten thousand who had turned out for Arthur Brown and Jefferson Airplane in 1968. Some one hundred and fifty thousand saw Bob Dylan and the Who the following year. David Gilmour was roped in by Charlie Watkins to mix sound through Pink Floyd's powerful PA system, borrowed for the event. Jimi Hendrix turned in a lacklustre performance. With radio static crackling through his amps, a blue stage light shone above his head like a beacon of ill omen. Eighteen days later, Hendrix was dead. A heavyset, bearded Jim Morrison of the Doors sang 'The End' as darkness fell. A year later, Morrison too was dead.

The death knell for the exuberant underground came as the decade closed, when in rapid succession the era's bright lights blew out. Jim Morrison, who brought the theatrics of Antonin Artaud and hints of Native American shamanism to the stage, died in a Parisian bathtub. Brian Jones, whose style and outrageous R&B whims fired concert riots, was drowned in his swimming pool, under the shadow of a window where A.A. Milne wrote *Winnie the Pooh*. Jimi Hendrix, whose electric gypsy-blues revolutionised guitar playing, choked on his own vomit after an overdose of downers and alcohol. Janis Joplin died in a hotel room from an overdose of heroin. All four were twenty-seven years old, the

deaths months apart. Despite rumours of sinister action by forces unknown, each fell victim to the Dionysian excess they embodied.

Undergrounder Susan Latham says, 'I saw Hendrix hail a taxi outside the hotel he died in three or two days later. Jimi had no guitar and was wearing a bandsman's uniform. We were the only people on the street until his taxi came. I imagined he looked backward at me passing his hotel as he left, his expression was stressed. I was bloody rude not to fan him.'

Others pulled through the worse for wear. John Lennon's phase of acid and cocaine burnout resulted in a short dalliance with heroin. A sedative for the excesses of the sixties, guitarists fell like ninepins to smack's dark somnolence. Davey Graham, Keith Richards, Jimmy Page and Eric Clapton became entranced by this most seductive of drugs, whose promise of sanctuary is a lie. Heroin brought false security to new users, who reached peaks of creativity before sliding into a morass of stasis.

Many sank into addiction as the seventies droned on like a jet idling on the runway, never achieving take off. Alice Ormsby-Gore, Clapton's girlfriend, a glittering aristocrat on the Chelsea circuit, joined him in an extended heroin-clouded stretch. She overdosed in a council flat in 1979. Her brother Julian, veteran of Hollingshead's World Psychedelic Centre, shot himself in 1974. High-grade heroin so poisoned oil fortune heir Sir Paul Getty that he was wheelchair bound for life. His beautiful wife Talitha – whose Moroccan-furnished lair, designed by Christopher Gibbs at Chelsea's Cheyne Walk, was down the road from Mick Jagger and Marianne Faithfull – overdosed in 1971. At her funeral, no one sent flowers. Such was the lot of Chelsea aristocrats who ventured into the netherworld of hard drugs, feeling money would shield them. Death *was* the great equaliser. It knew no class boundaries.

The doors of perception opened with drugs. What lay beyond none knew. For some, a vague enlightenment marked the first steps toward a spiritual life. For others, a spiral to their end. Most simply merged back onto well-trodden roads. Everyone knew someone who died, went insane or disappeared. The hippy trail winding from Ibiza to Marrakech, and Istanbul to Kathmandu, was littered with young Westerners who lost their way, their minds, or lives along the road. Heroin, hepatitis and poverty

were the dark side of opening the doors of perception. When some reached Freak Street in Kathmandu there was nowhere to run to, nowhere to hide.

This fallout left drug casualties at the fringes of every scene, those who failed the acid test. The list of LSD-aided psychotic breakdowns was long and disheartening. Syd Barrett and Peter Green of Fleetwood Mac were the two most prominent British musicians to suffer mental distress from Hoffman's 'problem child'. On tour, Green fell in with wealthy German hippies who spiked him with acid over a lost weekend at a Munich commune, the infamous Castle Kronwinkl, where Amon Düül practiced. Green simply said, 'I went on a trip, and never came back.'

Chris 'Ace' Kefford of the Move took an overdose of LSD and had such a horrific trip that he spent decades recovering in mental homes and treatment centres. 'I sat up with little figures sitting round me with pointed heads and long fingers. I got the horrors all night long. It fucked up my life, man.'

Folk singer Shelagh McDonald, poised on the edge of stardom after release of her 1971 *Stargazer* album, took an LSD trip that turned her world upside down. 'Three weeks later I was still hallucinating. I was walking around shops and looking at people who had no eyes or features, their faces were blank.' McDonald fled London and disappeared without trace for thirty years, roaming the Scottish countryside.

In America, Beach Boy Brian Wilson had an 'ultimate religious experience' on his third LSD trip. ('I was bathed in flames, dying, dying. Then the screen inside my brain went blank.') Later, he withdrew from the pop scene, leaving his masterpiece *Smile* unfinished.

The charismatic Skip Spence of Moby Grape had an unfortunate taste for amphetamines combined with LSD that sped him to a psychotic breakdown, during which he threatened bandmates with an axe. He spent six months in Bellevue Hospital Centre after being diagnosed with schizophrenia, before decamping to Nashville to record his heavily spaced minor classic *Oar*.

Roky Erickson of the 13th Floor Elevators pled insanity on a marijuana possession charge and was committed to Rusk State Hospital in Texas for three years, subjected to a brutal regimen of Largactyl and electroshock therapy.

Massive doses of LSD figured in the downfall of many. The mystic shine gave way to a hollow soul, as these pioneers fanned their inner light with chemicals. Syd's story begs the question of whether creativity can burn out through drug abuse. The answer is the decade's tragic lesson. 'When I came back from India everything had changed in London,' recalls Nigel Lesmoir-Gordon. 'For me, when Brian Jones died, the music died, that was the end. With the new decade, Jenny and I had changed. We had become responsible parents by 1970, starting a family. I knew I had to work, and couldn't have fancy ideas of going to Hollywood.'

'When I came back to London from America, things had changed and people had disappeared,' Duggie Fields explains. 'There were many drug casualties, and disillusionment with the realities of life. How were you going to make a living?'

Times had changed. The boom-time economies of Britain and America, which allowed middle-class youth to drop out, were at an end. The seventies were a decade of recession, followed by a return to rampant conservatism. Changes in freedom of lifestyle, dress, sexuality, recreation, philosophy, religion, and occultism were adapted by society. Stripped of idealism, the focus became the rights of the individual. Those who hadn't come of age scavenged for the 'hip philosophy' in the glutted pleasures of the seventies.

There were still beautiful moments, such as when Daevid Allen's Gong played Glastonbury Fayre in 1971. As the morning of the solstice broke, Gong shambled to the stage and revellers danced in a conga line from the top of the hill. The newsletter at the festival read: 'Wear a hat made of happy thoughts and look after yourselves in the shade.'

Drugs came in profusion, with downers and dope and beer bringing murky energy. As Marianne Faithfull noted, 'Drugs *replaced* the scene.'

Nancy Bacal, who recorded Pink Floyd's first radio interview, says, 'The atmosphere and my experiences in London in the late sixties were wild, compelling, unforgettable, yes. Also, poignant, scary and more than rough at the edges, at least in my corner of the world. Don't be taken in by images of bliss, peace and love. We were bushwhacking, foraging new ground. Many of us took hard falls.'

‘Underground’ became ‘alternative’, a sub-rosa club rather than movement. The underground press foundered because of its inability to organise to the next phase of growth. The distance from a patchwork quilt of entrepreneurs to middle-sized solvent enterprises grew as economies went into deep recession. Obscenity trials disrupted cash flow, as constant upheavals in staff from internecine power struggles weakened output.

In August 1971, after the longest trial in British judicial history, the editors of *Oz* were found guilty under the Obscene Publications Act. Refused bail, they spent a week in prison. In a humiliating affront, they had their long hair shorn. A vocal outcry among supporters and anti-censorship campaigners declared the sentences to be revenge against dissenting voices. Though the verdict was overturned, *Oz* ceased publication.

In 1970, *International Times* was charged with conspiracy to corrupt public morals for printing gay contact ads. Convicted in 1972, *IT* temporarily closed, though its editors rallied and the magazine continued in reduced form. There were twenty-one issues in 1973, down to three in 1975. Some enterprising soul should note that *International Times* and all its content were made public domain, so the incentive to revive *IT* remains.

The underground press continued via the feminist paper *Spare Rib*, the radical left *Black Dwarf* and hit or miss enterprise *Frendz*. Corporate music weeklies *NME* and *Melody Maker* absorbed underground writers, and flourished in the subsequent punk era. Tony Elliot, editor at *Oz*, took the format of *Oz* and *IT* and sloughed off radical content to create the mainstream *Time Out*.

The seventies marked a long retreat for Barrett. Syd’s musical vision reached saturation on ‘Jugband Blues’, a last pile-drive to the crest. Everything after was slow retreats and slight returns. In the parlance of jazz, Barrett lost his ‘chops’. His tightness, coherency and skill declined. Indifferent audiences, the pressures of fame, and the demands made on him to deliver marketable product, led to a wilful though haphazard surrender. ‘Syd wasn’t unique in his disintegration,’ observes Fields. ‘I

can’t say drug induced, drugs were a catalyst. Drugs could be very destructive. Syd didn’t get into heroin, for example.’

What Barrett did find was a downer of formidable potency. Mandrax was the seductive sedative that put a cap on his remaining light. If LSD had been the will to power in his visions, Mandrax was the tattered banner in retreat. The drug was a welcome refuge for underground stalwarts who’d reached too high too soon.

Barrett’s exile was indecisive. For twelve years, he alternated between London and Cambridge. Gradually, his returns to London dwindled and each oscillation brought him ever closer to home. Leaving behind unfinished paintings, scratched records, furniture, books and clothes, Barrett left for Cambridge. As for his unwanted houseguests, Syd rang Duggie and asked him to tell them to leave. Fields refused, though he had to relent and tell them, ‘“Look, Syd wants you out; he’s coming back!” They were frightened of him because he did have a violent side.’

Syd broke with author Thomas Wolfe’s edict: ‘You can never go home again.’ He returned and set himself up in the cellar of his childhood home.

Syd and Gala got engaged in Cambridge on 1 October 1970. At their engagement dinner at Hills Road with the Barrett family, Gala recalled that Syd stopped eating and went upstairs. He cut off his long hair to an inch from his skull and returned downstairs. As though the sixties had never happened, he severed links with his past with a pair of scissors. He rejoined the family fold, taking his place at the table in silence. Gala said, ‘No one batted an eyelid. They carried on with the meal as if nothing had happened, didn’t say a word. I thought, “Are they mad or is it me?”’

‘Cambridge is very much a place to get adjusted to; I’ve found it difficult,’ admitted Barrett. ‘It was fairly unusual to go back because it’s the home place where I used to live and it was pretty boring, so I cut my hair.’

Syd and Gala did their best to settle back into small-town life. Barrett’s sister Rosemary said, ‘They had a good relationship, true. Gala was a girl without too many frills, a plain girl, almost a country girl, according to [him].’

For Syd, his relationship with Gala was rife with the fear of abandonment that permeated his solo works. He soon fell prey to paranoid jealousy. The relationship foundered amid violence and recriminations. By trying to keep Gala, he drove her away. This proved to be his final romantic relationship.

Barrett told Mick Rock: 'I've often been in love. The last time it only lasted a few months and at the end of it, I almost broke down. I used to be in love and have loved many girls. Early on, being in love was more of a necessity. Now it's more of an involvement. I'd love to get married and have kids. The trouble is I've forgotten how to love. But I don't worry too much. It's something which occurs to me when I feel a bit blue-jeaned, which I don't always feel.'

Barrett's nieces and nephews visited their grandmother in Cambridge, leaving bicycles and toys littered around the garden. Ian, son of Donald, recalled, 'When I was growing up I never knew Roger at all. Whenever we visited the house, we would visit my grandmother. Rog would stay in his room and we'd hardly ever see him. All I knew was he wasn't well and liked to be alone. I had no concept he might be famous for some time and never knew any details about what he might have gone through until I was a teenager.'

Barrett resumed painting with some dedication. 'I'm a painter; I was trained as a painter. I seem to have spent a little less time painting than I might've done. You know, it might have been a tremendous release getting absorbed in painting. Anyway, I've been sitting about and writing. I think of me being a painter eventually.'

His paintings mirrored his traumas. 'Toward the end of the sixties he painted many canvases in oils fully in black,' Rosemary explained. 'They were six- to seven-foot in width. In the bottom corner was a small yellow square about an inch by an inch. That was the way he saw life.

'I remember looking at that and thinking, he's in trouble. He came home to stay with mum and it was a bad time. To me, he was somebody who I'd lost. A very bad time for him, he was distressed for a long time.'

In the style of the extreme minimalist art that was then popular, the painting encapsulated his position in life. With hindsight, the yellow circle on his silver Esquire could be said to symbolise hope. Here was hope compressed by black nihilism, a telling comment on where Barrett

saw himself. Practicing extreme reductionism in this art – after he finished, he burnt them. In the parlance of his colour synaesthesia, Rosemary recalled that if something were loud, he would say it was black.

Barrett moved from his old room down to the cellar, to play his guitar and paint undisturbed while his mother pottered away in the large garden out back, where ivy ran riot up the tall retaining walls. After readjusting somewhat, Barrett settled in. ‘I’ve been at home in Cambridge with my mother. I’ve been getting used to a family existence, generally pretty unexciting. I work down in a cellar. It’s quite fun, a nice place to live, really, under the ground.’

As a pendulum set in motion years before, Barrett wavered. If lying around and being inactive was unexciting, perhaps in Cambridge he could be a painter again. He painted, typed his lyrics, sat in the garden and settled to untangling the knots behind his mind. He spent idle weeks listening to blues records, strumming his new twelve-string guitar upstairs in the front room. ‘I mainly play the guitar,’ he told interviewer Steve Turner. ‘It’s very comfortable playing and it sometimes gets very interesting. I’m writing songs with it as well. You can play it all day though and you’re not really saying much.’

Signs of Barrett’s withdrawal were obvious to friends and one-time intimates, who found him vague and detached. That said, he did trek up to an old mate’s wedding in London. ‘Syd came to my wedding,’ says Seamus O’Connell, ‘still good-looking loveable and friendly, though he had started to get a bit strange.’

Barrett brightened for the day, and even showed up with Roger Waters. Afterwards, Seamus recalled that Syd had joined them down the pub for a pint, where he was reunited with Mrs O’Connell, his one-time tutor in the occult. What could her tarot cards tell him now?

Other friends tried to reach him. ‘I remember going to his flat in Cambridge and winking him out to come and meet some people,’ says Peter Wynne-Willson. Peter and Susie took Syd to see Maharaj Huzur Charan Singh Ji at a Sant Mat meeting in Cambridge in 1970. ‘I thought if there were people who totally wanted him to be all right he would be relaxed. It wasn’t like that. He fairly rapidly got jumpy, so I took him

back home.' Jenny Lesmoir-Gordon says Barrett attended two meetings, sitting in the aisle. Recognised by a fan on his second visit, he fled.

On 14 November, *Barrett* was released. Syd dismissed the album and its predecessor out of hand. 'They've got to reach a certain standard,' he groused, 'and that's probably reached in *Madcap* once or twice and on the other one only a little – just an echo of that. Neither of them are much more than that.' He told Mick Rock, with a note of resignation, 'I've made three LPs and two of them haven't been very interesting. The last two have been so dusty, and unnecessarily so. What can you do?'

Syd designed the *Barrett* sleeve, a sketch of mounted insects made at Camberwell. By accident or design, insects on a white background represented the songs inside, drawn haphazardly but taken together, impressive. Fitting then that the cover was a drawing left over from his art-school days, as *Barrett* seemed like a collection of sketches produced in an all-night burst of nervous energy. Some were unfinished, some ruined, others finely formed and a few dazzling. *International Times* panned the album: 'A severe case of brain damage, despite valiant attempts to save the album by David Gilmour and others.'

Photos by Barrie Wentzell show Syd clad in a black velvet coat and scarf, like a French symbolist poet. In a Mandrax trance, his eyes hang half closed, wasted. Startled in some shots, blank in others, his heavily sedated eyes are unfocused. This is the *poète maudit après le deluge*. After the gold rush, as Neil Young sang.

His seat was taken by others, younger and hungrier, who played the rock-weirdo card for all it was worth. Brian Eno, for one, was interviewed for *NME* by Chrissie Hynde, who found him living in a white room lit by candles, empty except two pillows, a tape recorder and beige carpeting. A leather-clad redhead flounced by, fingers covered with glue and green parakeet feathers, while Eno made gnomic pronouncements clad in a red satin kimono and black dress pants.

To promote *Barrett*, Bryan Morrison, music publisher and booking agent, had Syd sit down for a quixotic promotional junket with the music press. Barrett was installed in the white-walled offices of the Bryan Morrison Agency at Bruton Place. From outward appearances, Barrett appeared rational, though the resultant interviews showed his dissociation

from reality. Jonathon Green, author of *Days in the Life*, then a reporter for the British edition of *Rolling Stone* magazine, said, 'I went into this big white room. Syd, dressed all in white, spent the whole time looking at the top corner of the room.'

Barrett always had an unusual sense of humour, dropping lines with a deadpan expression that challenged listeners to guess whether he was serious or not, or handing them jokes inside jokes. Mick Rock noticed that he seemed 'very up and bubbly, he would laugh in strange, strange moments. Like there was a joke, but only his joke.'

As he realised that no one understood, Syd's jokes became his own entertainment. Whether he played games with interviewers, he found the task of meeting them tedious and unwanted. Asked questions of varying degrees of intelligence, Barrett responded in kind. Interviews launched with coherent sentences, then dead-ended in vague, monosyllabic replies. When the questions proved too personal, Syd became evasive. This was the muted and roundabout challenge of a man unable to connect, and damned if he was about to try now. Chris Welch of *Melody Maker* noted that 'anything that seemed uninteresting or irrelevant merely provoked strained and disordered replies'.

Orbiting a few themes or preoccupations, Barrett jumped from subject to subject. His lexical skill intact, he drew from a deep well of words, evidence of his large, undamaged vocabulary.

One theory holds that Barrett had Asperger's syndrome, an autism spectrum disorder characterised by limited social interaction and restricted, stereotyped interests. Motor clumsiness and atypical language were characteristic, while language skill was unimpaired, often highly fluid. As the onset of Asperger's syndrome occurs in childhood, and is not known to develop in adulthood, Barrett does not fit the diagnosis. Syd's psychosis, delusions, serious cognitive difficulties, social withdrawal and disappearing social skills were instead indicative of complex partial seizures; weaknesses in perception manifested in paranoid or bizarre delusions, with disorganised speech and thought. Substance abuse compounded the condition, though after this visit to London Barrett foreswore drugs.

Peter Barnes, press agent at Lupus Music, Bryan Morrison's music publishing agency, coordinated the publicity. Barnes told Nick Kent that

interviewing Syd ‘was ludicrous on the surface. Syd would say something incongruous like, “It’s getting heavy, isn’t it?” You’d have to say, “Yeah, Syd, it’s getting heavy.” Conversation would dwell on that for five minutes.’

In an acute observation, Barnes captured an interesting aspect of Barrett’s mental distress. Barnes went home and played back a tape of an interview, rife with excruciating silences and awkward pauses. ‘Listening to the tape afterwards you could work out there was some logic there. Syd would suddenly be answering a question you’d asked him ten minutes ago while you were off on a different topic.’

This hints that Barrett easily detected context but had difficulty screening contextually irrelevant information. Thus, his mind flooded with data, but he lacked any ability to sort through it. The focal point in his discourse shifted from ‘here and now’ to ‘there and then’. As his connections between past and present weakened, there was less possibility of him using memory to sort stimuli.

Patterns in Syd’s answers reflected chaos theory, where erratic ellipses are consistent in inconsistency, and stable in instability, buttressed by perplexing logic. Beyond his jokes or slowed response time, in these last, torturous meetings with the press, there was a good deal of fear. A mask hid a frightened man who took the underground’s weight on his narrow shoulders. Many felt that Barrett was an exemplar for his generation.

Barrett’s speech patterns, never conventional, became soliloquies of evasion. Like an allusion without a referent, or a chord without a tonal centre, the pearl inside Barrett’s shell of words rattled. Interviewing Syd was akin to tuning into Radio Luxembourg, where snatches of speech emerged, only to be swallowed back into the ether. His thoughts, forever just out of reach, acquired an air of mystery. In moments of blinding clarity, he explained his ideas behind composing ‘Octopus’. As he orbited in widening ellipses, he faded in and out of transient bursts of clarity within a haze of confusion.

From Barrett’s perspective, the story was different. It is likely that he was having great difficulty sorting underlying context from the information he received. When sitting for interviews, Syd might have had trouble reading his interviewer’s expression, much less what he meant. Was his interviewer happy, angry, neutral or threatening? In normal

discourse, the eye scans across someone's face in triangular pattern from eyes to mouth to nose. A person with impaired prefrontal lobe function will dart across someone's face with no fixed pattern, searching for clues to ascertain mood. Staring fixedly, they attempt to decode expressions. A twitch of the cheek or a sudden wrinkling of brow might seem equally telling, but no cues will be apparent. Someone concentrating, with furrowed brow or pursed lips, might seem angry or threatening.

Barrett tried to detect hidden meanings in the questions asked of him. His vague answers served as a protective shield. An innocuous question could carry manifold intimations of threat or danger, imagined or real. In paranoia, a seed of doubt spread in the tangled vines of suspicion. Connections were perceived where there were none. Unrelated events or thoughts seemed linked in a sinister, menacing way.

With the loosening associations of knight's move thinking, unexpected and illogical connections formed between ideas. These were matched by a paradoxical paranoia, which sees associations everywhere. As though the mind, in holding thought patterns already in inexorable drift, seeks to link them back together in a most erratic way. Barrett was not getting through. The result did not justify the effort. In 1971, he granted his final interview. Words failed him. For someone who exercised such gifts with them, Syd lost ability to communicate. His friend Andrew Rawlinson noted in *Mojo*: 'One symptom of LSD overload seems to be connections between things disappear. It seems he couldn't connect anything up anymore, a fantastic loss for someone for whom words, music and paintings were different facets of a single brilliant orb.'

'You'd get some sense out of him. Then he'd laugh at you,' said Jerry Shirley, who witnessed Barrett's dissolution at close hand. 'Sometimes to put everybody on; sometimes because he was genuinely paranoid. Like the weather, he changed. For every ten things he said that were off-the-wall and odd, he would say one coherent thing, right on the ball. Out of touch with what had gone on just before, he would turn and say, "Jerry, remember the day we went to get a burger down Earl's Court Road?" Complete recall of something that happened a long time ago. Just coming and going, all the time.'

Photographs caught Syd between worlds, literal and metaphorical. Clad in an old Crombie coat nicked from Duggie, his black Telecaster guitar dangled around his neck like a strange ornament. The accoutrements of rock'n'roll as foreign as satin shirts, his expression reveals embarrassment and an awareness of the incongruity of promoting an album he cared little for. In one photo, he holds his guitar out as though giving it away.

Though Syd continued to write songs, none reached completion. 'I always write with guitar. I've got this big room and I just go in and do the work. I like to do the words and music simultaneously, so when I go into the studio I've got the words on one side and my music on the other. I suppose I could do with some practice.'

Barrett frankly admitted that he had lost touch with the current scene; too many choices and not enough reasons to choose. The music scene was rife with glorified pub-rock bands treading university-ballroom circuits, playing endless boogie music without much boogie. The rest was art-muso dross, as longhairs tried to scare up some pretence of virtuosity whilst hunched over their hire-purchase instruments. Syd told Chris Welch: 'I think pop today is a bit difficult to take in some ways, but it's fine. I've never felt like I have been left behind. I don't really buy many records, there's so much around that you don't know what to listen to. All I've got at home is Bo Diddley, some Stones and Beatles stuff and old jazz records. I like Family, they do some nice things.'

In line with 'treading the backwards path', Barrett retreated to what he was listening to before he left Cambridge for London. He relaxed listening to Ma Rainey's blues ('terrific, really fantastic'). He observed, 'During the past six months there have been some very good things released. The best things I've bought are the new Taj Mahal album, Captain Beefheart and the Band. I don't think any of them have influenced my writing though. I've been writing in all sorts of funny places. I'm just waiting to see how the records do, what the reactions are, before I decide on anything else. My time has been fairly well spent since leaving. I haven't had a particularly hard time and I was okay for money. I've heard of a few plans for me to do some appearances but there is nothing positive enough to talk about. There are vague ideas about a

group as well. I've just spent my time writing fairly regularly. I've certainly not been bored and there are still much things to do.

'When I was with the Floyd, the form of music played onstage was mainly governed by the records. Now I seem to have got back to my previous state of mind.'

Without structure or a will for fame, Syd's song ideas remained sketches, permanently uncompleted. Boredom nipped at his heels. 'Living in Cambridge I have to find something to do. I suppose I could've done a job. I haven't been doing any work. I'm not really used to doing quick jobs and then stopping, but I'm sure it would be possible.' Barrett scrambled for the right words. 'It has something to do with what I felt could be better as regards music, as far as my job goes generally, because I did find I needed a job. I wanted to do a job. I never admitted it because I'm a person who doesn't admit it.'

Inactivity bothered Barrett, though not enough to give up his hard-won privacy. He joked, 'The only work I've done the last two years is interviews. I'm very good at it.' In a candid turn, he admitted, 'I may seem to get hung-up, that's because I am frustrated work-wise, terribly. The fact is I haven't done anything this year, I've probably been chattering, explaining that away like anything. But the other bit about not working is that you do get to think theoretically.'

Think theoretically he did, the wheels of his mind spinning, with each thought leading back to another. Barrett bluntly admitted, 'I don't know what I'm talking about. Trouble is, talking on this level is a waste of time because no one benefits. I mean, we're not getting anywhere. It's not that you're put there to say anything.' He told Chris Welch of *Melody Maker*: 'I've never really proved myself wrong. I really need to prove myself right.'

In January 1970, Syd stated that he still wanted to continue with music. 'I've got some songs in the studio, still. I've got a couple of tapes. It should be twelve singles, and jolly good singles. I think I shall be able to produce this one myself. I think it was always easier to do that. I feel, though, the record would still be the thing to do. Touring and playing might make that impossible to do. I'm afraid I think I'd have to get on with [the musicians]. They'd have to be good musicians. I think they'd be difficult to find. They'd have to be lively.

‘But I can’t find anybody. That’s the problem. I don’t know where they are. I mean, I’ve got an idea that there must be someone to play with. If I was going to play properly, I should need some really good people. It’d be a groove, wouldn’t it? I’m still in love with being a pop star really. As a job, it’s very interesting but very difficult. You can be pure enough to talk about it where you can actually adapt to the grammar of the job. It’s exciting. You channel everything into one thing and it becomes the art. I don’t really know if pop is an art form. I should think as much as sitting down is.’ For Barrett, being a rock star remained ‘the job’.

Syd lay low for an entire year. Returning to Cambridge, he wandered through the town, dismayed when the warren of streets around Falcon Yard was pulled down for a hideous modern shopping complex, car park and offices. A slice of Cambridge life was smashed to the ground, including the YMCA where he’d gotten his nickname, the Guildhall where he’d played, and the Alley Blues Club he went to with his friends. Barrett was often spotted walking through Cambridge, whatever the weather, impervious to rain or cold, wandering Silver Street locked in his own world.

‘Syd used to be immaculately dressed,’ recalled Bill Gray to Mark Sturdy, who operated the Andy’s Records stall in Market Square. ‘He had this burgundy, red velvet suit with trendy boots and his distinctive curly shock of hair, looking every inch the rock star. He always seemed a shy, remote character though – people would certainly know him. He kept himself to himself.’

Barrett commuted between Cambridge and London, conflicted about what to do as a second act in the theatre of his life. He was twenty-four years old, a juncture whereupon many young people embark on careers. Bryan Morrison encouraged Barrett, often in strong terms, to get himself together and record. Peter Barnes told Nick Kent: ‘Syd had always had this big phobia about his age. We would try to get him back into the studio to record, he would get defensive and say, “I’m only twenty-four, I’m still young, I’ve got time.”’

Mick Rock told Mark Sturdy: ‘Syd was not necessarily losing the thread. He had wandered off the beaten track, working his own thing out.

Not wanting to play to an audience, or even his peers and friends. He still came down to London – every so often he would loom up in some shop somewhere, or down a side road. He hadn't dropped out of the scene.' Cutting his ties to the London underground where he'd shone so brightly proved a slow process.

On 16 February 1971, Barrett ventured from his lair, travelling to London for a solo session on Bob Harris's *Sounds of the Seventies* on BBC Radio One. A set comprised of 'Baby Lemonade', 'Dominoes', and 'Love Song' showed him playing well, save for an occasional lapse in tempo, though singing from obligation rather than any great desire to perform.

Michael Watts of *Melody Maker* interviewed Barrett in March. Though Syd's short-cropped hair, jumper and blazer made him seem more like a trainee accountant than a one-time pop star, and his tendency to stare at the ceiling made him seem disconnected, Barrett gave his most concise interview. He addressed his days in Pink Floyd, time at Camberwell, and his ambition to produce a new album. Watts asked him, 'Do you fancy playing live again?' Barrett responded, 'Yes, very much.' Once Watts pressed him on his exit from Pink Floyd, Barrett retreated into mechanical statements ('Yeah, that's nice' or 'I suppose so') rather than direct answers. He even said, 'I feel I'm jabbering.'

Barrett became a victim of his reputation as an acid casualty. One wonders how other rock stars of the era would have held up under such scrutiny. Proving one's sanity after being branded mad was nigh on impossible.

Steve Turner of *Beat Instrumental* caught up with Syd in April after months of trying to capture him for an interview. Although they planned to meet in London, Barrett didn't show. When Turner rang Syd in Cambridge, Barrett accused him of not turning up, being a time-waster and slammed the receiver down.

Later, Barrett relented and agreed to a rescheduled interview. Taking the train down from Cambridge, Syd arrived with an atomic rooster haircut, purple satin jacket and stack-heeled boots; an overall effect reminiscent of Slade's street-scruff glam look. What struck Turner was the 'fear behind his eyes, almost as if there was danger of my discovering more than I should know. His answers to my questions were interesting.

He would start off by saying something related to my question but then begin to free associate and would soon be off in a different direction altogether. Even then, much of what he said was highly perceptive, reminiscent of the 1966 Bob Dylan *Playboy* interview, where much of what was said was seen as a joke but proved penetratingly true.

‘“Do you see pop as an art form?” I asked. “As much as sitting down is,” he replied. He talked excitedly about buying a new guitar. I asked if he would join me in a taxi where he could be dropped off at the music store, he didn’t want that and made an excuse about something else he had to do. The real reason, I’m sure, was his paranoia. Months later I met him on an underground train, he acknowledged me and remembered the interview. The frightened face I’ll always remember.’

Turner wrote: ‘During the interview he lights each cigarette from remnants of the previous one and pivots his eyeballs at an incredible speed as he speaks. “I’ve just left a train and had to pay an awful taxi ride,” he says, slowly tipping his ash into an empty coffee cup. “I’ve come to look for a guitar. I’ve got a neck in the other room, quite an exciting morning for me.” Something about him makes you think this may well be right. His talk is slow and unrevealing. The answer given often bears no relation to the question asked. Particular areas of his life he avoids mentioning.’

Turner says, ‘Syd turned up on April 19 at his publisher’s office. That’s how I tracked him down because he didn’t have a publicist and his only regular appointment was to turn up and check or collect royalties. I do remember him seeming very fearful and the time I bumped into him on the tube he looked at me vacantly when I introduced myself and scuttled off at the next stop.’

Mick Rock, on assignment for *Rolling Stone*, went to visit Syd in May in Cambridge. Rock had no way of knowing that this was to be Barrett’s final interview. He never spoke to the press again, keeping a silence that spoke volumes about what the much-vaunted sixties had cost some of its brightest minds.

Outside, on a glorious spring day, in the garden at 183 Hills Road, Barrett reclined on a bench and stared at the sunlight-dappled leaves. His famous green eyes registered nothing amiss, though his words came out crooked, like someone who had been through trauma. Rock and his

girlfriend Sheila joined Syd and his mother in the garden for tea and cakes. Barrett was quiet and soft-spoken, as Rock took evocative photographs, and asked Syd questions.

Barrett seemed uncomfortable, even in the company of old friends. Rock noted, 'Syd doesn't see many people these days. Visiting him is like intruding into a very private world.' Barrett's conversation was elliptical, often vague and metaphorical, though at times he could be precise and literal. 'I'm full of mothballs of the world. Disappearing, avoiding most things. Not doing a thing. I've been thinking luckily that everything's very simple,' said Barrett. By inference, *everything* had been very difficult.

Rock wrote: 'Hollow-cheeked and pale, his eyes reflect a permanent state of shock. He has a ghostly beauty, which one normally associates with poets of old. His hair is short now, uncombed, wavy locks gone. Velvet pants and new green snakeskin boots show some attachment to the way it used to be.'

'I'm treading the backward path, I just waste my time.' Barrett said he walked a lot, a lifelong panacea for a troubled mind. 'Eight miles a day,' he said. 'It's bound to show. But I don't know how… I'm sorry I can't speak very coherently, it's rather difficult to think of anybody being really interested in me. But you know, man, I am totally together. I even think I should be.' Some wondered if he wasn't joking. Barrett, after all, grew up acting in plays by Samuel Beckett and Harold Pinter, was well versed in the Goons and Jabberwocky, and had a perennial taste for the absurd. Even so, his short, fragmented thoughts spelled desolation. 'I'm full of dust and guitars,' he said.

'He still paints; sometimes crazy jungles of thick blobs; sometimes simple linear pieces,' wrote Rock. 'His favourite is a white semicircle on a white canvas. In a cellar where he spends much of his time, he sits surrounded by paintings and records, his amps and guitars. He feels safe there, under the ground, like a character from one of his own songs. Syd has been known to sit behind locked doors, refusing to see anyone for days at a time. Syd leaves the cellar and goes up to a sedate little room full of pictures of himself with his family. A pretty child. English tea, cake and biscuits, arrives. Like many innovators, Barrett seems to have missed recognition due him, while others have cleaned up.'

‘I’d like to be rich. I’d like much money to put into my physicals and to buy food for all my friends,’ mused Barrett. Syd abandoned pop’s glamour for the simpler pleasures of home and hearth, of memories of an uncomplicated childhood, not of its end. A recurrent theme was ‘simplicity’. Syd told Rock: ‘Everything’s been very simple. You know, I had a very straightforward life. I went to a school just over the road.’

As Rock, Barrett and Rock’s girlfriend Sheila sat down to take tea Barrett brightened and twinkles of his old self emerged. ‘I’ll show you a book of all my songs before you go,’ he told them. ‘I think it’s so exciting. I’m glad you’re here.’ Barrett produced a folder with typed lyrics for all his songs. Acoustic in hand, Barrett played them a new version of ‘Love You’. ‘I worked this out yesterday,’ he explained. ‘I think it’s much better. It’s my new twelve-string guitar. I’m just getting used to it. I polished it yesterday.’

Putting his new Yamaha twelve-string aside, Barrett confided to Rock that he worried about being old. ‘I wasn’t always this introverted,’ he says, ‘I think young people should have much fun. But I never seem to have any.’ Syd told Mick and Sheila he did not take acid anymore, but didn’t want to talk about it, ‘There’s really nothing to say.’ In the garden, he stretched on an old wooden seat. ‘It’s getting it together. Once you’re into something…’ he trailed off into silence. Switching tangents, Syd said, ‘I was fabulous onstage. But I can’t get to another one readily. It was so easy.’

He lamented the loss of his silver guitar. As the afternoon ended, they rolled a joint. Barrett’s closing statement in his final interview was: ‘I don’t think I’m easy to talk about.’ He paused, then looked around distractedly. ‘I’ve got a very irregular head. I’m not anything that you think I am anyway.’

Save for scattered final appearances onstage and one return to the studio, Syd set about walking the backward path in earnest. He would never release another record. He would never say another word to music journalists. He shut himself off from friends, foes and fans alike.

Mick Rock observed, ‘The cellar had a womblike feeling. There were pictures of him as a child on the wall. He used the phrase “taking the backward path”, so he does talk about it in a reasonably direct way. Somehow retracing his steps perhaps, so clearly going through some

searching. He wasn't in anguish at all about it. He was thinking about things. He'd made these albums and they weren't quite what he wanted, but they were okay. He didn't speak disparagingly about the Floyd, he was fairly accepting.'

As dusk fell, he said his goodbyes, and closed the door leading to the garden. He descended to his room in the cellar. His underground shrank to one room, where musical tunes echoed in fitful waves.

Just as Barrett withdrew from the spotlight, Pink Floyd assured Syd glory by association. If his star appeared to be ascendant once again by courtesy of reflected glory, Barrett seemed indifferent. *Relics: A Bizarre Collection of Antiques & Curios* – a compilation of singles, out-takes and curiosities released in May – included 'Interstellar Overdrive' and the Barrett-penned singles 'See Emily Play' and 'Arnold Layne', remixed in faux stereo. Barrett had a copy at home, and followed the album's chart progress. He brandished a copy when Rock visited him. 'Look what I found in the hit parade. Ninth is quite high, isn't it? For me, it's five tracks that I haven't thought about.'

As Pink Floyd compiled tracks for *Relics*, they chose to keep 'Scream Thy Last Scream' and 'Vegetable Man' off the album. John Leckie recalled that they were rather contemplative as they listened, recalling the intensity of those sessions and musing on Barrett's implosion. Gilmour affirmed to *Uncut*: 'Syd was a constant presence in our minds and consciences, I imagine.'

In December, *Rolling Stone* published Barrett's final interview. Meanwhile, Pink Floyd moved into high gear with the first live performances of a new suite. 'Eclipse' became *The Dark Side of the Moon*. Their 1972 album marked Floyd's exit from the underground and breakthrough to mass stardom. The LP explored themes of alienation, mortality and madness, and included sidelong views on Barrett's own eclipse. Waters began addressing Barrett's implosion on his psychedelic melodrama 'Incarceration of a Flower Child', an unrecorded 1968 song Marianne Faithfull covered decades later. On 'Fearless' from 1971's *Meddle*, written by Waters using an open tuning in G major learned from Syd, one of the song's lines was taken by some to refer to Barrett.

In January 1972, Jenny Spires came to visit Barrett at Hills Road. Like others from the Cambridge underground, Spires had experienced the full wild ride of the sixties, travelling across America, attending Woodstock, meeting Ken Kesey and riding on his famed psychedelic bus, 'Furthur'.

Spires married the bass player from Delivery, Jack Monck, a genial and unaffected man. Monck gigged a lot with drummer Pip Pyle (later in Gong), and the Miller brothers, who, with Carol Grimes, formed Delivery. Leaving Delivery, Monck and Spires went to live outside Cambridge in Graveley near Huntingdon. In time, the large front room became a band room with drum kit, organ and various amps and guitars. Various friends and musicians used to drop in, one of whom was Syd. Jack and Jenny set up the 10p Boogie at Fisher Hall, a venue for friends to play – bands like Henry Cow, the Global Village Trucking Company, and Hatfield and the North.

When Jenny and Jack arrived in Cambridge, she rang Syd at his mum's. Winifred was pleased to hear from her, and glad Syd would be seeing old friends. Jenny invited Syd to their cottage in Graveley. She was six months pregnant, and a cosy hippy domesticity prevailed at the cottage. Syd came over, and simply jammed with Monck. Jack was unaware of who he was; nor had he witnessed his breakdown, so Syd was perfectly relaxed. To Jack, Syd was an old friend of Jenny's from London. They sat talking, playing guitar and sharing jokes. Syd seemed lucid, not entirely himself, but relaxed. To Jenny, Syd appeared so well compared to when she had last seen him in spring 1969.

'I was living in a small cottage in Graveley with Jenny Spires,' says Monck. 'I was working at Red House Records, playing in bands in Cambridge, and running a club at Fisher House. We had bands we knew up from London and would have jam sessions. I was playing with John 'Twink' Alder and we were involved in running the club and playing in bands. I met Syd through Jenny, who had known him pretty well before. In the post-Floyd period, Syd was living at Hills Road with his mum.'

Of all Syd's Cambridge friends, Jenny was the last to engage him with the outside world. She and Jack restarted the blues club, Juniper Blossom, at the Red Cow, which Monck and drummer Pip Pyle had run while they were students at Cambridge Tech. Jack and Jenny hired bands such as Chicken Shack, Champion Jack Dupree, Mike Patto and Alexis

Korner. Juniper Blossom moved on to Fisher Hall in March 1972. Joly MacFie took over and he and Twink ran the club on alternate Tuesdays. MacFie says, 'Twink and I visited Hilton Hall near Cambridge earlier in 1971, where he ran into Jenny and Jack. Twink had left the Pink Fairies in July… Juniper Blossom was essentially a jam club. Global Village Trucking Company played there once. Fred Frith would jam but no other members of Henry Cow. We'd bring people from London, like Paul Rudolph [ex-Pink Fairies], Trevor Burton [ex-Move], and Paul Kossoff of Free who would take drugs and jam. Arjuna girls Pam and Carol served cookies and tea in the backroom. Photographer Victor Kraft once brought his one-time lover, composer Aaron Copland. After observing the group jam on one Hendrix riff for thirty minutes he observed, "Interesting – but it lacks dynamics." Once, to our surprise, the Radha Krishna Temple showed up with a bunch of Fender gear and did a raucous electric jam.'

For a time, their musical circle orbited around What's in a Name, a clothes and hippy-paraphernalia shop in Union Street, which also ran a stall in Market Square. Owner Steve Brink was engaged in securing gigs. MacFie recalls, 'We returned to Cambridge in 1971 for Steve Brink's wedding on Grantchester Meadows, where many bands played including the Fairies and Hawkwind. That's when we met Brink. Hawkwind's drummer Terry Ollis had broken his arm after falling down stairs while out of it on mandies, so Twink joined the group and I went along as second drummer. I soon had to drop out as I had contracted hepatitis going around. I spent three months recovering in Devon.

'When I had gone to find Twink after my illness, I had found he, regularly dropping acid, had become obsessed with magick and Aleister Crowley. Cambridge was a prime location for that study, a prime motive for his move. His departure from the Fairies had been prompted by beginnings of his break-up with long-time muse Silver Darling, but they had reconciled. She moved into Brink's house, next door to What's in a Name, at least for a time. Brink soon moved out as he was having a kid. American guitarist Bruce Paine moved in with his girlfriend. Bruce, Jack, and Twink jammed in the back room of the store – an ancient bakery. I lived in the barn above; I had to climb a rope to get in or out.'

They all loved the blues, so Jenny and Jack took Syd to see Detroit blues guitarist Eddie 'Guitar' Burns play at King's College Cellar in early January, at the beginning of term. Jack and Twink were backing Burns, a blues favourite who'd played with John Lee Hooker and recorded his own songs for Chess. Syd knew Twink from his UFO days when he was drummer of Tomorrow and Pink Fairies.

As was the case when he saw Soft Machine in 1969, the sights and sounds of live music sparked a light in Barrett. Syd had never stopped playing guitar, riffing along to Howlin' Wolf and Bo Diddley at home. Seeing Eddie Burns stirred a renewed interest in electric blues. Syd was delighted with the gig, and thoroughly enjoyed it. He brought his black Telecaster along and played for a while, sitting in on one song and then sitting down.

In *Terrapin* fanzine, Mervyn Hughes reported that after Burns's solo spot, the announcement of 'Syd Barrett on guitar' made him sit up. Barrett got onstage and jammed with Monck on bass and drummer Twink. Together they improvised around a few loose boogie chords. Hughes reported that Barrett played well, staying in the background. 'The Cambridge Blues Society booked Eddie Burns and they asked Twink and I to be the backing band,' confirms Monck. 'We had a jam session, which Syd played on. He was playing a black Telecaster with white inlays that was very nice.' Hughes talked to Barrett after the gig. Syd stated, wrongly, that this was his first performance since leaving the Floyd. He added that he was working on songs for a new album, and had come 'to watch some people'. 'He seemed very shy,' wrote Hughes, 'and surprised I knew anything about him.'

Barrett enjoyed playing in the unpressured atmosphere of King's College Cellars. The next day, Jenny took Jack and Twink to see Syd and his mum made them tea. In *Ptolemaic Terrascope* magazine, Twink recalled Barrett working on new songs and painting a lot. 'A great artist. The first day we went down to his studio, he had all these oil paintings he'd done. There was this one big one and I was looking at it thinking how beautiful it was. Jenny said, "I think that's lovely, Syd" and he said, "That's for you Jenny." He just gave it to her. All the time I was working with him was a pleasure.'

The painting was a dazzling abstraction modelled on Paul Gauguin's *Vision after the Sermon* (1888), a vibrant colourfield that author Will Shutes notes, 'wilfully subverts a formal influence' and demonstrated substantial planning.

Later, they went to another local gig. Syd again brought his Telecaster. Hawkwind were headlining with Twink's former group, the Pink Fairies, at the Cambridge Corn Exchange, a yellow brick Victorian venue in Wheeler Street. Advertised as the 'Six-Hour Technicolor Dream', the underground had moved nationwide. Hawkwind played first, at the height of their powers, blasting through their Top Twenty album *In Search of Space*. Lemmy Kilmister, later of Motörhead, played thundering bass while David Brock ground hypnotic power chords and Nik Turner's sax screamed, and Dik Mik and Del Dettmar made merry with swooping oscillators and shrill sine waves. Exotic dancer Stacia Blake performed her riveting, acid-inspired freeform movements at stage front, with her enormous fifty-two-inch bust exposed. After the show Syd, Jenny and Jack went backstage to say hello to Lemmy, an old London friend.

'Syd jammed with us at the Corn Exchange when Twink and I played in a Last Minute Put-Together Boogie Band,' recalls Monck. 'This Last Minute Put-Together Boogie Band was an ad hoc collection based around American singer and guitarist Bruce Paine, in the Allman Brothers tradition, the music we were doing. We had Fred Frith and Syd sitting in with us playing guitars. Which was all right, there wasn't any spotlight on Syd. No pressure on him, and many other people onstage as well.'

The line-up was Bruce Paine (vocals and guitar), Jack Monck (bass), Twink (drums), Fred Frith (guitar) and Syd Barrett (guitar). The quintet forged through an hour-long set. Frith was well versed in vanguard guitar, making him a good foil for Barrett, who Paine introduced halfway through the hour-long performance. 'We'd like to bring Syd Barrett to the band stand. How about a hand for Syd Barrett!'

Syd stepped up, plugged in, and let loose with a little Hubert Sumlin squalling lick. Of the five songs played, four were basic blues progressions with random guitar abstractions thrown in for good measure, culminating in a nine-minute-long improvisation, free form and

abstract. Barrett played rhythm, anchoring the jam with repeated riffs from Hubert Sumlin on ‘Smokestack Lightning’.

When the Pink Fairies came on to close the night, the audience was restive and a fight broke out, much drinking and dope, mikes pulled loose from the mixing board – a standard Cambridge show in those days. Two enterprising students, Mike Kemp and Gary Lucas, recorded the show, and kept the tape in storage for decades.

The impromptu group did try to coerce Syd into playing a few more songs, but he wasn’t playing ball. Fred Frith told Mark Sturdy: ‘We loved Syd’s songs and we wanted to help him perform them. He couldn’t remember them well. He couldn’t play anymore and there was little point pretending otherwise, however much I wished it weren’t true.’

Jenny Spires suggested that Twink and Jack might like to play with Syd. There had been much jamming, from which Stars evolved. They were all good musicians and loved to play. On finding themselves in the same place, they formed a group of sorts. ‘We all thought it was a great idea – I was excited because Syd seemed to be coming out of something,’ recalled Twink. ‘I always like to help some way if I can.’

The trio went round to Syd’s house and knocked on his door. His mother answered and said, ‘Syd, there’s someone at the door for you.’ Barrett came to the door and Jenny said, ‘Twink and Jack would like to play and maybe do some gigs, just the three of you.’ Syd replied, ‘Yeah, all right, come in.’

They began rehearsing in Syd’s cellar the next day, with Twink’s drum set and Monck’s bass and cabinet. ‘Twink said he reckoned Syd taped rehearsals down in his mother’s cellar,’ asserts Monck, ‘but they were primitive. I wouldn’t describe rehearsals as tight. There was not the same pressure as playing a major gig.

‘Jenny suggested Twink and me getting together with Syd and doing some more playing. A great talent and [he] wasn’t doing anything. It seemed like he would have enjoyed some contact with other people. I also thought it was a good opportunity for me and could result in something. I don’t know what Twink’s attitude was on that score.

‘Syd was detached and withdrawn, displaying symptoms of someone who found it hard to communicate. Maybe a nervous breakdown or it had always been there dormant, and triggered by success or acid. Many

people took a lot more acid than Syd. I don't think you could pinpoint that as sole cause. Syd had become a star who everyone wanted to know, and which must be enough to do anyone's head in anyway. Especially when you're young and it's happening so fast.

'Occasionally he was great, charming, and very nice to be around. That was on a rare occasion. Early on, when I met him through Jenny, it was more relaxed. Putting him in the spotlight didn't do him or our relationship any good. There was no grand master plan, not on Syd's part and not on mine. It seemed a good idea. If anybody did put it together, it was Twink. Twink probably thought it seemed a good idea: "Let's do it!" A decision we drifted into, and everyone around us was going, "Yes, do it, it would be good!'" All done on a small Cambridge level. Quickly, we came up against not being able to live up to expectations.'

Joly MacFie says, 'I was sharing a house with Twink and Paine. I was away for some reason. Paine was a somewhat vain and career-oriented American who went on to join Steamhammer. He wasn't compatible with Syd. When Twink showed more interest in Syd, Bruce got pissed off and moved out, which was the end of the group. Syd, Jack and Twink jammed in the back room of Steve Brink's What's in a Name boutique next-door, underneath my room, and I used to hear them while reading or crashed. Having missed earlier shows I had no idea who Syd was and had already got well acquainted over cups of tea before I found out. Syd was skinny and fragile.'

(Despite rumours to the contrary, Stars did not play at the Perse School on Hills Road a week before their gig at the Corn Exchange. Jack Monck refutes the notion, saying he doesn't remember this and would have, as he had studied at the Perse.)

The trio dubbed themselves Stars – an ironic wink of a name, if ever there was one. Two small-scale gigs followed on 29 January and 5 February, at the Dandelion Café, a coffee house with vegetarian food on East Road. The shows were great, if loose, as Stars meandered through their set. 'I was amazed working with him,' said Twink, 'at his ability as a guitar player.'

The Rex and the Dorothy Ballroom closed that year, so their first proper show as Stars was an open-air gig at Market Square, on an unseasonably sunny 12 February. Like the Dandelion, audience members

recall this as another great gig, though Syd, longhaired and bearded, was not the focus. ‘We had a gig on the corner of Petty Curry Lane and Market Square, with a drum kit and some amps,’ says Monck. ‘In those days having electric bands playing in open-air spaces, especially in the middle of town, was unusual. People weren’t as used to it as they are now. There was no stage and we had some power from somewhere. Our second gig and a good one. With Stars, the first gig was best and after that, downhill. We never lived up to expectations. A three-piece band is pretty demanding and everyone in the group has to be good. Stars was just the three of us.’ Twink said, ‘We played Market Square with a huge audience, the most memorable gig. A good gig, brilliant. There was such a crowd – unbelievable.’

Such glimpses kept people from writing Barrett off as a sixties wastrel. Informal Stars audiences weren’t aware who they were and simply saw them as a relaxed local band. Jack, Syd and Twink were all well known in their own circles in London, playing together because it was nice to play. Syd enjoyed these low-key gigs.

Their confidence boosted, Steve Brink prevailed on Twink for Stars to play at Cambridge Corn Exchange on 24 February, opening for Skin Alley and Detroit agit-rockers the MC5, and another Bruce Paine improvised combo with a different line-up. With Steve Brink promoting the gig, the group found themselves pulled into performing almost before they realised what was happening. MacFie and Brink banded together as Shine Music to manage Stars affairs. MacFie explains, ‘The deal was it would be low key, so it wasn’t massively promoted.’

Still, Stars became a difficult proposition for Syd, with the Corn Exchange gig hyped as a comeback gig of sorts, adding sudden pressure. Not only was this to be a comeback but a hometown gig, crowded with old faces, but Syd didn’t know any of them anymore and had only recently started meeting people in Cambridge again. He may well have felt pressured by expectations. Some came out of morbid curiosity, to see whether the Madcap could pull it off. One friend recalls, ‘Syd radiated a feeling of hopelessness, as if he found gigging pointless. Syd felt pressured by expectation because he wanted to enjoy the gig and put on a good show. He was torn.’

Buoyed by their reception in the Square, Twink cajoled Bruce Paine into driving him and Syd to London in a bitter freeze. They hung out at the rehearsal space below the *Frendz* magazine office at 305 Portobello Road, where Hawkwind and the Pink Fairies jammed.

At the Roundhouse, they saw Hawkwind play the famed 13 February gig that produced 'Silver Machine', which rocketed to the top of the pop charts. Lemmy and Dik Mik of Hawkwind were well stewed on a volatile cocktail of Mandrax, speed, cocaine, hash and acid, playing with ferocious abandon.

One-time Tyrannosaurus Rex member Steve 'Peregrine' Took remained in touch with Syd. Took was a fixture on the squalid downers-and-dope drug scene around Ladbroke Grove, where last stragglers of the underground gathered in shabby bedsits to pop mandies, smoke hash, get drunk and stare into space.

Took's sometime flat at 100 Cambridge Gardens was the site of much drug-bound jamming, restless itching moans and noises made by people too fucked up to listen to one another. MacFie says, '100 Cambridge Gardens was the flat of some girls from Swindon that were friends of mine. Several Pink Fairies, friends and associates moved in. There was plenty of outrageous drug taking and nitrous-oxide-fuelled chess for money sessions. There wasn't much music made on the premises due to noise concerns. If Took was resident, it was briefly.'

Syd is claimed to have sat in on a chaotic session in the cellar of Took's manager Tony Secunda's offices. Twink, Mick Wayne, Larry Wallis, Duncan Sanderson and Syd Barrett are all said to have guested.

'Beautiful Deceiver' (aka 'Syd's Wine') is believed to feature Barrett on guitar, though there is no clear proof whether this is so. The very pretty 'Molecular Lucky Charm' featured whistling and whirring vocal sound effects. 'Seventh Sign', 'Still Yawning Still Born' (renamed 'Give') and 'Lucky Charm' seem more likely to feature Barrett, featuring two guitars. 'Still Yawning' somewhat resembles 'Rats'. On one track, Took falls off his stool, giving an idea how 'together' sessions were. (Some sources place the sessions as taking place in autumn 1972.)

Ladbroke Grove was in transition, as ramshackle as ever, with various itinerant populations shifting about. All Saints Hall, site of Barrett's early triumphs, was demolished that year. Wherever one looked, the spirit that

powered the sixties was in decline. Besides popping Mandrax and jamming with Steve Took, Barrett compounded his apprehension about the Stars gig by going to see his old group perform.

On 17-20 February, Pink Floyd played the Rainbow Theatre in Finsbury Park, London, introducing *The Dark Side of the Moon* to the press and public. 'I went to a post-Syd Pink Floyd concert in Finsbury Park,' says Roger Waters's former lecturer and landlord Mike Leonard. 'Quite an important one for them. I met Syd lurking in the hall. I don't think they'd even invited him; he'd come on his own. I'd heard he'd overdosed on things, and was fairly freaked out. He looked taut and gaunt, probably going through the process while making his solo albums. He was still Syd though. He hadn't put on weight yet.'

Pink Floyd's epic suite was well received by critics and fans. What ran through Barrett's mind as he watched them only he knew, though Leonard remembers the strong feeling he got from running into Barrett. 'I thought it must have been strange for a guy who'd been in Pink Floyd looking at it from the outside.'

Once back home, Stars reconvened. The cramped cellar too small, they took their equipment to Twink's room behind What's in a Name. They rehearsed 'Octopus', 'Dark Globe', 'Gigolo Aunt', 'Baby Lemonade', 'Waving My Arms in the Air', and 'Lucifer Sam'. Monck remembers Syd as being nervous throughout the rehearsals. Guitarist Alan Lee Shaw, later of the Damned, watched from sidelines and said, 'I would turn up at rehearsals. Syd was in great shape physically. Every inch the psychedelic rock star. Mentally, a damaged soul.' Shaw added that the rehearsals were 'a casual affair as Syd was so "out of it"'.

Nigel Smith, Syd's personal roadie in Stars, found Syd to be 'a gentleman, a friend and a musical genius'.

The closer they came to performing, the more detached Syd seemed. Barrett was not fearful of the spotlight; he simply couldn't see any point in returning to it. Come the night, Barrett awaited their turn to go on. He wore new velvet trousers bought in London and trimmed his beard. One fan recalled, 'I saw Syd play with his band Stars at the Cambridge Corn Exchange and before the start he came over to talk to me as if we had met in the pub, a real nice, down-to-earth guy.'

However, as soon as he walked into the dressing room, all involved could see that he wasn't comfortable being back in that situation. With musicians, roadies and crew all hanging out, expectation ran high. This proved a definitive moment for Syd. After the mighty MC5 and Skin Alley played, the Corn Exchange was half-full. 'Nigel Smith was responsible for the stage,' explains MacFie. 'Ill-conceivably in retrospect, he set players at maximum distance from each other on a large area. They should have been closer. They'd only played in small spaces.'

Terrapin reporter (and Barrett biographer) Rob Chapman wrote: 'Syd mostly rambled up and down his Stratocaster searching for tunes that probably weren't there. Syd came on, played his songs and then left… He did versions of "Octopus" and "No Man's Land" from the *Madcap* album, "Waving My Arms in the Air" and "Baby Lemonade" from *Barrett*, and "Lucifer Sam" from the legendary first Floyd album. Twink played drums and Jack Monck played bass until his amp decided it couldn't cope with Syd's musical journey and went dead! Lyrics were, for the most part, inaudible due to the terrible PA system. Syd did no talking between numbers, which were sadly under-rehearsed. [Joly MacFie notes, 'This is audience expectation speaking. The fact is Stars were a loose improv outfit from the get go.'] That was a genius onstage and he did show odd flashes of brilliance. After about an hour Syd decided he had had enough, so he slowly unplugged and went home.'

From the first song, a slow version of 'Octopus', it was evident that the Corn Exchange PA was not up to the task. Once again, Syd's vocals were well nigh-on impossible to decipher. Though Stars played 'a remarkable "Lucifer Sam"', the set closer was a 'shapeless and ragged' twelve-bar instrumental.

'We had a bad PA system mixed badly,' explained Twink. 'Syd couldn't hear his vocals. Guitars were completely lost. All Syd could hear were drums. We did manage to get across "Lucifer Sam".' There was dismay from the audience, among them Clive Welham, who'd played with Syd in Geoff Mott and the Mottoes ten years before. 'He looked completely at a loss, stumbling and stammering to sing,' said Welham. 'Applause from the audience was only in sympathy. The music was poor quality, like some drunk performing.'

Besides his memory blanks, hesitant playing, and the PA sabotaging his vocals, Barrett cut his finger open, bleeding on his black Stratocaster as he played. There he stood, beneath the gloomy lights, bleeding on his guitar. Psychedelia was dead, as if anyone needed further proof.

Still, both participants and spectators state that the Corn Exchange wasn't such a terrible gig and most there had come to see the MC5. For Syd, the show proved to be the final straw. He didn't want to be a part of that sort of gigging anymore. As a musician, he loved to play but didn't want to perform in these places. Apart from anything, he disliked all the pretence. 'They all looked confused and with this Syd walked offstage, like watching him fade into himself again,' Jenny Spires observes. 'Jack hadn't witnessed him like this but I'd seen it and I'm sure Twink had.' MacFie adds, 'The mood was not bad afterwards, triumph through adversity – better luck next time.'

Roy Hollingsworth reviewed the gig for *Melody Maker*. 'Syd didn't seem interested in the microphone,' he wrote. 'He stopped playing, scratched his nose, and then started playing again. Three figures to my front shrugged shoulders, and left. They didn't understand Syd Barrett. The Madcap played on, as if he understood. He played and played and played. No tune in particular, he sounded out of tune most of the time anyway. The tune was most certainly in his head. He played a demented solo that ran ragged lines up to ten minutes. His ragged hair fell over a face that fell over a guitar and seldom looked up. He changed time almost by the minute, keys and chords made little sense. Fingers of his left hand met the frets like strangers. They formed chords, and then reformed them, and then – apparently nearly got it right – and then wandered away again. Then Syd scratched his nose again, and let loose a short sigh. Like watching somebody piece together a memory that had suffered the most severe shell shock. He has a beard now. His eyes are still deep cavities hiding an inexplicable vision.'

'My personal memory of the Corn Exchange gig was it was a failure,' asserts Monck. 'I felt we'd brought many people down and failed on that occasion. A high-profile appearance; we were supporting the MC5, and had many people rooting for us and wanting it to be good. You could tell Syd wasn't interested. He had to front the whole thing, so he had the hardest job. He couldn't remember words and he didn't want to be there.

You could see him thinking, "What the hell am I doing here, I don't want to be here at all," and not being able to communicate with anybody. A real letdown; I never heard of him doing any other gigs after. That last experience, I would have thought, would have cured him for good. If it was depressing for us, even more depressing for him.'

Joly MacFie says, 'Stars were basically a free jazz trio, with Monck and Alder kicking along light-footed psychedelic skiffle rhythms which gave Syd plenty of room to improvise freely. I did sound for Stars at those last couple of shows at the Corn Exchange. The first one, on Thursday, opening for MC5, was indeed a disaster. Not through any fault of Stars, they had been set too far apart onstage and there were no monitors on MC5's PA system –one big amp with a volume knob. I had to run between front and backstage continuously adjusting to get it as loud as possible. Stars had only played small intimate venues beforehand and were not prepared for this. The mood was all right after the show – a "you can't win them all" sort of thing.

'Two days later, they opened for Nektar and it was a whole different deal. Nektar had two WEM Audiomasters – ten channels with monitors. We'd learnt our lesson and put Stars closer together. A great show, well received, and everyone happy. This made it even more of a shock when the Roy Hollingsworth review of the Thursday show appeared. The review, as I recall it, did not talk much about Stars, but went on about how Roy, a professional scenester, felt alienated from the young crowd at the show. He was in a weird mood and predisposed to write unfavourably. I later listened to a cassette of the Nektar show and can confirm it was good. Neither that tape, nor any others, has survived. All three were enjoying playing so much they were oblivious to public interest and Syd's fragile state, which came back to bite them.'

One audience member recalled the gig with Nektar as 'a strange, refined, and quiet show'. MacFie says, 'Nigel Smith lent me a tape of the Nektar show, now lost. Victor Kraft followed Stars around photographing and recording on a Nagra, all lost.'

When *Melody Maker* came out the following Wednesday, Twink bought a copy. 'We weren't ready for it. A disastrous gig, reviews were bad. Syd was hung up about it; so Stars folded. He came round to my house and said he didn't want to play anymore. He didn't explain; he just

left.' Barrett had not even read the article; he was just disenchanted with performing. Twink and Monck recruited Bernie Elliot on guitar to play a Stars gig at London's Seymour Hall, but the promoter wasn't having it without Syd in the line-up. When Rusty Burnhill split with Gretta, he came and stayed with Jack and Jenny. In late 1972, Jack and Rusty started a new band, Rocks Off.

'Three days after, Nektar, my daughter was born so I was out of the loop for a while,' Jenny Spires explains. 'I didn't see Syd until I went to show him the baby a little later. He didn't mention the gig and nor did I. I didn't think twice about it. I understood he hadn't wanted to play and it didn't seem to be much of an issue, but then I had seen him like that before.'

Barrett went back to his cellar and resumed painting. His emotions continued to flatten. Rosemary recalled, 'When he came back to Cambridge he was always alone; he never talked, neither to me nor to my mother. He probably thought we belonged to a different world, and didn't think we could be of any help. A bad period.' Barrett was alone with his inner turmoil. There wasn't much room for anyone else. Music was locked away in a mental cupboard.

Released from his contract with EMI on 9 May, Barrett is said to have signed a document that ended his association with Pink Floyd and any financial interest in future recordings. Malcolm Jones explained, 'Bryan Morrison said he was going to renegotiate a contract for Syd on his own. The Floyd were probably getting six percent royalties, one-and-a-half percent each. This meant on his solo stuff Syd got a quarter of six percent. I never knew if that happened or not.'

Syd's absence did little to derail his growing cult-figure status. By December, *Terrapin*, a fanzine issued by the Syd Barrett Appreciation Society, was begun by John Steele and Lawrence Himfield. *Terrapin* lasted through 1974 under the late Bernard White. Roger Waters, a Syd enthusiast himself, saw no harm in it. 'If your hobby is to be interested in whether Syd did this or did that, or what colour shoes he wore on 18 March 1967 or whatever, who am I to say that's obsessive? Some people collect stamps! Better than watching TV, in my view. Being a Syd Barrett fan seems to me to be a perfectly legitimate and reasonable way of

spending your spare time. A very interesting man, he wrote some fantastic songs. There's a body of work; unfortunately it is complete.'

Barrett's setting sun was to be eclipsed by his former band's best-selling album *The Dark Side of the Moon*. Released in March 1973, the LP was an epic exploration of madness and mortality. Its stunning musical breadth and universal themes made the album an instant classic with enduring appeal. Syd's sonar Binson blips were superseded by a VCS3 sequencer. His notion of 'a sax player and girl singer' realised by old Cambridge friend Dick Parry, saxophonist on 'Us and Them' and 'Money', and singer Clare Torry's bravura performance on 'The Great Gig in the Sky'.

Sidelong allusions to Syd appeared at intervals on the album, couched in clichés of mental illness. In 'Eclipse' Waters wrote of a madman walking on the grass. To Waters, the grass was a square lawn between the River Cam and King's College chapel. 'When I was young that was always the piece of grass I felt constrained to "keep off". The lunatic was Syd, obviously in my mind, very Cambridge-based, that song.' Waters thought of 'the idea of the desire to walk on the grass being mad, of something being wrong about that'. The lunatic on the grass was ambiguous; half admired for having the brazen freedom to do as he pleased, or crazy.

Cambridge offered Barrett relative anonymity. With a beard and long hair, he blended into the student crowds. In line with his secretive manner, Syd showed up in unexpected places, feeling things out.

Ex-*New Departures* man Pete Brown booked ex-Cream bassist Jack Bruce for an informal jazz and poetry performance in Cambridge in October 1973. 'I got there late. There was this insane band onstage, playing this interesting, weird jazz. Somebody had recognised Jack and handed him a double bass. I vaguely recognised a guitarist. Then during my set, I said, "I'd like to dedicate this poem to Syd Barrett. He's here in Cambridge and he's one of the greatest songwriters in the country." The guitar player, sitting in the audience, got up and said, "No, I'm not." That was him. That he could get up and play with Jack Bruce was something.'

The impromptu band jammed on Horace Silver's jazz standard 'Doodlin''. Brown adds, 'When I heard him play with Jack Bruce in

Cambridge, he was playing very well. On a completely different level to what he was doing with the Pink Floyd. They were playing a kind of jazz, with Jack Bruce playing a stand-up bass, and a drummer. It wasn't rock. Barrett's time at that gig was very good. A shame he didn't develop further as a musician. He would have developed into something very interesting.'

Interest in Barrett surged. Genesis, with Peter Gabriel stalking the stage in a fox's head and red frock, took cues from Barrett with their creepy *Nursery Cryme* album.

Glam rock also dovetailed with this renewed interest. David Bowie and Marc Bolan of T. Rex were quick to cite Barrett as an influence in interviews. Since young Bowie had been a mod in makeup at the Marquee, and an even younger Bolan allegedly scuffling as a rent boy outside the Scene club, the bizarre oddity known as Glam raised a queer head over the scene. Lashing together Chuc.k Berry, Weimar Berlin decadence, mimes, *kabuki* theatre, Piccadilly drag queens and gay Soho lances with ton-up boys and aggressive rock, Glam was shocking yet populist.

The stage face of glam stemmed straight from the androgynous makeup, electrified hair, and kohl-lined eyes of Syd Barrett. His persona, lest we forget, was the first sign that someone in pop had had the foresight to wear a mask, raising questions about the mechanism that served as rock's staging ground.

In 1973, David Bowie, now a star in his incarnation as Ziggy Stardust, released *Pin-Ups*, a collection of sixties covers that influenced him. Not least among them was 'See Emily Play'. Distended voices, electronically altered on the chorus, echoed 'Scream Thy Last Scream', also Bowie's own spooky 'Bewlay Brothers' evoked Bowie's brother Terry's descent into schizophrenia. When Bowie's album topped the charts, the inclusion of 'See Emily Play' ensured that Syd received a healthy royalty cheque.

The last time Mick Rock saw Syd was on an unexpected visit to Rock's flat in Notting Hill Gate early that year. Barrett visited Mick Rock and wife Sheila, whose sunny personality cheered him up. Syd sat at their table and his conversation wandered, but Mick and Sheila didn't mind. However, Rock was struck by Syd's nervous laughter. Otherwise, his

time was spent shopping, which had become a passion. Barrett was still fit and slim and could ride the tube in anonymity.

In April, Barrett visited the Bryan Morrison Agency, who administered his publishing under Lupus Music, to collect royalties. When Morrison asked if he'd written new songs, Barrett said, 'No,' collected his cheque and left. Two months later, Barrett came back into the office looking for more publishing royalties. Morrison related the tale to writer Richard Strange, recounted in his autobiography *Strange: Punks and Drunks and Flicks and Kicks*. Morrison said, 'Syd, you're not owed anything 'til the next quarter. You were in here two months ago and I gave you a cheque for everything we owed you.' Syd replied, 'No I wasn't. I don't recognise this room. I've never been here before.' Morrison had taken the wise precaution of getting Barrett to sign a receipt for the cheque. He showed him the receipt. 'Look Syd, you took a cheque two months ago.' Barrett went quiet, before shouting, 'You cheating bastard! That's signed in red ink. I never use red ink, I *hate* red,' and stormed out the office, calling Morrison 'a cunt'.

Undaunted, Morrison took on an overseer role with Syd, even putting him up at the Park Lane Hilton, giving him star treatment in hopes of whetting his appetite for making music. Barrett left his mother's house in Cambridge and returned to live in London. From the twenty-second floor, Barrett stared down over Hyde Park and the Serpentine, which, like Kenneth Grahame's Wild Wood, 'lay before him low and threatening, like a black reef in some still southern sea'.

In December 1973, *The Piper at the Gates of Dawn* and *A Saucerful of Secrets* received a double-LP repackaging under the silly title, *A Nice Pair*. This meant more royalties for Barrett, split six ways or not. Money, never a great concern for Syd, who lived frugally, aside from the odd bout of reckless spending, now came in quantities that proved enough for his modest requirements.

Syd moved into Flat 902 of Chelsea Cloisters, an apartment block off the respectable end of King's Road. Barrett once again installed his mother's green drapes over his windows and shut out the world, locking the door behind him. His room became both refuge and escape. Like Badger in *The Wind in the Willows*, who 'simply hates society' and stays

isolated in the wild wood, Syd disdained company. For Barrett, the Wild Wood of London crawled with weasels, stoats and ferrets.

Visitors included Bryan Morrison and Duggie Fields, though Syd did nothing to encourage them. He just wanted to be alone, like Tolkien's Tom Bombadil: 'He is his own master… now he is withdrawn into a little land, within bounds that he has set, though none can see them, waiting for a change of days, and he will not step beyond them.'

Syd's walks took him through the winding roads of Chelsea or across the River Thames to Battersea and back. After walking for hours, he ended at the same terminus. His room, a figurative womb; safety amid the mortal terror of the wild wood outside. To Barrett, London was full of strangers, the faces of friends passing him on the street, some whom he'd known since childhood, didn't register. Psychologists use the term avolition to describe difficulty, or inability to start and persist in goal-directed behaviour, often mistaken for disinterest. Barrett's declining interest in going out and meeting friends, playing guitar or exploring London meant many hours spent doing little.

His seclusion could be seen as almost monastic, save for any lack of discipline or schedule. The line about watching television late into the night from 'Scream Thy Last Scream' seems prescient. At Chelsea Cloisters Barrett stared at the television for hours at a stretch – this when there were three channels and two went off-air at midnight. He strummed various guitars; listened to LPs on his hi-fi, filling an inactive life with television, backed into the corner in his armchair under the dull glow the *News at Ten*.

The 50 Hz refresh rate on European television produced a low-intensity, almost imperceptible flicker, which scientists felt created a hypnotic effect. Barrett's sensitivity to such mild strobing meant his television might have lulled him into trances.

With no new product to sell, Harvest repackaged Barrett's solo albums in a double-LP set with a new sleeve for an American market now craving all things Floydian. Hipgnosis were commissioned to design the sleeve. Storm Thorgerson went to arrange a photo session with Barrett, who slammed the door in his face.

Thorgerson nonetheless designed an evocative cover using one of *The Madcap Laughs* photo session shots of Syd sitting cross-legged like a gaunt Buddha. The cover featured a plum, orange and matchbox, recalling Barrett's strange trip in Cambridge a decade before. The *Syd Barrett* double LP, released in July 1974, even charted in America, reaching Number 163.

The louche seventies, decadent and glam in a tarty and uninteresting way, paralleled the bleak economic and social outlook pervasive in Britain. Despite Roxy Music, Bowie and the Spiders, and T. Rex, the charts were full of some of the worst music Britain ever produced. Bands like Mud were the arse-end of the Glam league. For every Robert Wyatt making great music, there was the pedestrian shuffle of Mungo Jerry. For every John Martyn, Nick Drake or Roy Harper, there was an insipid return to pop frivolity.

During the conservative Heath administration, discontent mounted. The young unemployed were bitter that they had missed the swinging prosperity of the preceding decade. Rubbish piled in London parks as sanitation workers went on strike, joined by miners in provinces. Energy shortages meant blackouts or flickering lights down the pub. Leicester Square was filled with black garbage bags teeming with rats. The IRA (Irish Republican Army) began a prolonged bombing campaign that saw people walking the streets and riding the tube in fear. In March, an IRA bomb exploded at Earls Court, with seventy injured and four losing limbs.

A global recession brought on double-digit inflation. Parts of London were blacked out for several hours a day as coal stocks dwindled. Boutiques on the King's Road took to lighting candles on counters. From January to March, this so-called 'Three-Day Week' meant that Barrett sat at Chelsea Cloisters, waiting for nightfall with nothing to do. When pubs were exempt from electricity cuts, Barrett took to sitting alone in them.

Barrett was sometimes spotted wandering London, shopping or travelling on the tube, though few friends made an effort to speak to him. *Terrapin* editor Bernard White (or folk musician Roy Harper, depending whom you ask) ran into him on Oxford Street and tried to talk, though Barrett walked away. 'Where are you going?' White called after him.

Barrett responded with an icy, ‘Far further than you could possibly imagine.’

At an age where one is old enough to reflect and young enough to enjoy, Barrett turned twenty-eight alone. He was tucked in to watch *Top of the Pops* with Mud and the Osmonds. Armed with beans on toast, beer and Benson & Hedges cigarettes, he ate, drank and smoked the hours away. He sat in his cocoon-like chair and watched television until the programmes went off air. On occasion, Rosemary would visit him and take Syd out and about.

Myths and rumours abounded in inverse proportion to Syd’s inactivity. Nick Kent, spurred on by meeting Barrett in 1972, wrote a long article for *NME*. ‘The Cracked Ballad of Syd Barrett’ hit newsstands in April 1974. Although comprehensive, the piece fed Syd’s growing mythos. One shouldn’t fault Kent, a sparkling and lucid writer then as now. The journalist seemed unsure of how best to remember Syd. There was a strong push to bury sixties icons. Kent made an effort to be objective, seeking out Barrett’s associates, friends and intimates.

In the media, Syd’s achievements were eclipsed by his dissolution. Viewing Barrett as a barmy ‘madcap’ rather than analysing what led to his downfall was easy. Roger Waters angrily remarked that the media ‘don’t want to know the real Barrett story. There are no facts involved in the Barrett story so they can make up any story they like, and they do. There’s a vague basis in fact: Syd was in the group and he did write the material on the first album, eighty percent, but that’s all. That first album and one track on the second – nothing else.’

Waters neglected to mention that Pink Floyd played shows through to 1971 where they performed Syd Barrett compositions. Stalked by the inescapable presence of Syd, it was rare for any of the band sit for an interview where his name was not brought up. With Nick Kent’s article in mind, Waters acidly remarked, ‘Because we’re successful we’re vulnerable to attack and Syd is the weapon used to attack us. None of it is fact, all hearsay.’ Waters immediately set about writing his own elegy to Barrett, ‘Shine on You Crazy Diamond’.

Buoyed by the publicity generated by Kent’s article, Bryan Morrison and Harvest/EMI urged Barrett to work on new material. Barrett complied for the last time. In August 1974, he returned to Abbey Road

with Peter Jenner presiding. Syd bought several expensive guitars and hired a full drum kit. John Leckie, engineer on the sessions, recalled to the *Observer*: 'Peter Jenner said, "Syd's going to come in, he's not in very good shape. We're going to see what we can get." Syd came in with new guitars. He had six Stratocasters – his flat must have looked like a music shop. He still looked like Syd – long hair, a bit unkempt but still looking good. He seemed vacant, a bit shell-shocked; still, every day he would turn up with a different girl. There were no lyrics, nothing at all. I'm not sure if he even had any songs.'

Neither as good or bad as legend holds, the session tapes showed that Barrett had regressed to the Hollerin' Blues days, playing Shadows and Jimmy Reed-like riffs. If nothing else, they provide an excellent guide to Syd's inspirations. There were traces of Bo Diddley's 'Pretty Thing' on 'Boogie #1', and bits of Jet Harris bass lines throughout. As he stripped back his guitar formula, the rhythmic blues backings recalled Steve Cropper or Bo Diddley. A track Jenner dubbed 'John Lee Hooker' was a half-remembered lick from 'Mojo Hand' by Lightin' Hopkins. There was not a hint of psychedelia on the bare blues licks and riffs, sketched so that one would be hard-pressed to recall their melodic lines. Reverb or mewling wah pedalling were the sole effects. Playing sparse, echoing electric blues leads, Barrett churned away with good timing, though he showed little inspiration.

Syd overdubbed rhythm, lead and bass. 'If You Go, Don't Be Slow' and 'Boogie #2' come the closest to being fully developed songs, and with more focus might well have worked. 'Ballad #2' is a pretty, melancholy fragment that fades in just under a minute. Despite a few inimitable Barrett melodic lines, or his subtle artful leads on 'Untitled', there was no structure. Barrett sounded out of practice, rather than mad.

The sessions were abandoned before vocals or any other instruments could be added. Syd told Leckie that he was going to sing, only to remain silent when a microphone was set up. On the box containing the session tape Leckie scribbled: 'Various oddments – more information in box.' Jenner's notes are telling: 'lots of echoes, doodles', 'weird and far out', 'very short, lots of silence', and 'gets very far away, dies at 30:20'. On the recording sheet were Jenner's rough titles: 'Echo Stuff', 'John Lee

Hooker', 'If You Go, Don't Be Slow', and the evocative 'Chooka-chooka-chug-chug'.

'Frustrating and upsetting, and sad,' recalled Jenner. 'Glimpses would come through in chaos and confusion, a melody line or lyric… Bits of clarity would emerge. In the undergrowth flowers were still growing, but he couldn't get at them.'

Once more, Barrett foundered on overdubs, as he drowned riffs and melodies in reams of guitar. Five days of sessions that produced layer upon layer of guitar tracks illustrated Syd seeking to clarify only to confound himself.

Syd's most underground recording of all was never to be released because there was nothing *to* release. Stripped to the basics, his melodic lines were tangled. With Mandrax out of his system, his rhythmic timing was much improved, though a sporadic jarring fault in rhythm indicated a lack of practice or a deeper glitch in his sense of time. Syd couldn't match the ideal he had in mind, and seemed to realise this. Most likely, he couldn't have cared less. Leckie said, 'He didn't want to be there.'

'There was this great thing John Leckie spotted,' recalled Jenner. 'He'd come into Abbey Road studios and glimpses of tunes would come out. We'd think, "Record that!" and then it would disappear into incoherence again. Then he'd walk out of the studio. Leckie sussed [that] if he turned left, he came back and if he went right, he didn't. This was uncanny, but it was what happened. There was probably some banal reason. At the time, you thought, "Hooooo."'

After his last walk out, Barrett never recorded another note. 'On the last day he left and turned right,' Leckie remembered. 'That was the last we ever saw of him.'

That same month, the Barrett family sold the house at 183 Hills Road. Syd's mother moved to St Margaret's Square, a small cul-de-sac south of the city centre. For Syd, rooted in his childhood, there was no longer a home to return to. The past was gone. Here he was, confined to an unending, static present. Realising his career and the last links to his childhood were gone, he sank into deep depression.

Barrett turned on the television and opened a bottle of lager. New guitars gathered dust in a corner as he buckled into his easy chair for a

deep hibernation in front of the hypnotic flicker of his Dynatron TV. He outfitted his flat with a large refrigerator and put on weight. Music was abandoned for food, television and drinking in the pub. In place of Mandrax and dope, he ate and drank until Syd was gone.

Barrett achieved complete anonymity as his body metamorphosed into an unrecognisable shape. One could be forgiven for thinking there was deliberate planning in his becoming fat. Barrett sat in the corner of an Earl's Court pub, the Marlborough, which became his 'regular', staring into space and drinking Guinness. Eyes blank with steady drinking; he sat chain-smoking and eating crisps for hours on end. Another regular, Andrew Giaquinto, remembered buying him a drink at the Marlborough. 'He occasionally came to the local, always drank a half. We never had a conversation.'

Once in a rare while, Barrett hit the town, from habit rather than need. Duggie Fields ran into his former flatmate at the Speakeasy. Syd's eyes registered no telltale glint of recognition. 'I wasn't sure he recognised me. I was with some people he'd known for years. We talked for about five minutes. Did he know who we were? That was when he was starting to get heavy. He didn't look like the same person at all.'

Lindsay Corner mentioned to Kris DiLorenzo that she had the impression that Barrett might have been under psychiatric care, as he seemed lethargic and overweight from medication. John Marsh saw Syd at South Kensington tube station. 'He looked like the middle-aged Aleister Crowley; totally bald, about fifteen stone, wearing a Hawaiian shirt and Bermuda shorts.' Hoppy also sighted Syd in South Kensington: 'I did see him and he was very fat, whereas he had always been thin.'

Barrett gained a hundred pounds in a six-month stretch. Harrods was a short five-minute walk from his flat, and convenient. Syd abandoned cooking altogether and bought prepared meals from Harrods or Sainsbury's, sitting at home and devouring comfort foods like mincemeat, lamb chops, sausages, bacon and eggs. As his self-image imploded, he developed a compulsion for depilation. First went the hair on his head, then his eyebrows. In less than a year, Barrett transformed into a hairless, fat middle-aged man – his most radical reinvention of all.

The centrepiece of Pink Floyd's 1975 album, *Wish You Were Here*, 'Shine on You Crazy Diamond' was a twenty-six-minute-long dirge with an anthemic chorus, split in two. The first thirteen-minute section being Roger Waters's tribute to his childhood friend and former bandmate.

Pink Floyd developed the track at live shows, with the first known performance being at Toulouse, France on 18 June. Barrett was so far from a threat to Pink Floyd he had become an icon of nostalgic regret. *Wish You Were Here* also featured 'Have a Cigar', a bitter indictment of the record-business hoop-jumping the Floyd were obliged to perform when they signed with EMI and went on their first American tour.

The themes had been brewing in Waters's mind for some time; reflections on insanity and musings on the perilous cost of fame expanded into an elegy on the absence of Syd Barrett, a literal and metaphorical absence expanded into a theme of universal scale. The title track was a lament that many took as Waters's postcard to his old bandmate, though Waters insisted it was far more general, where the standard valediction of 'wish you were here' took an altogether more affecting meaning.

Composer Phil Salathé notes, 'The influence of "Dark Globe" is present in "Wish You Were Here", whose beginning recalls the intro to "Opel" as well.' In 'Wish You Were Here' the lyric about distinguishing between a green field and a steel rail recalled the steel rail in Barrett's 'If It's In You'. Inference by absence is a potent current in Pink Floyd's work. From the distorted view in Arnold Layne's mirror, to unusual chord substitutions in Wright's scales, to theme of absence in *Wish You Were Here* and musings on breakdown in communication on the underrated *Division Bell*. What Vedantic philosophy calls *abhába*: 'Inference of presence of a thing from absence of what is contradictory to it.'

At their first English show in November 1974, a taped fragment of 'Dark Globe' echoed across the intro to 'Shine on You Crazy Diamond'. Wright closed with a lovely medley of motifs from 'Emily', 'Arnold Layne', 'Flaming' and 'Bike'.

Part III, called 'Syd's Theme' during recording, centred on Gilmour's haunting riff. 'The whole album sprang from that one four-note guitar phrase of David's,' said Rick Wright. The perfect counterpoint for

Waters's elegy to Syd, the phrase, Pink Floyd's most recognisable, evoked Barrett's lead-in guitar phrase after the introductory build-up in on 'Astronomy Dominé', not on a note-to-note but gestural basis. There was also some relation, in 'Shine on You Crazy Diamond' as a whole, to 'Dark Globe'.

'I don't know where it came from,' said Gilmour. 'I was just playing an A-minor chord and moved my fingers to the wrong position. It could be just an accident – a haunting, calling sound.'

Part IX of 'Shine on You Crazy Diamond' was Rick Wright's turn to pay tribute to Syd. Wright played a touch of vocal melody for 'See Emily Play' on Mini Moog, closing the album. 'Very strange,' said Roger Waters of writing lyrics for 'Shine on You Crazy Diamond'. 'The lyrics are the bit of the song about Syd, the rest of it could be about anything. I don't know why I started writing those lyrics about Syd. That phrase of David's was an extremely mournful sound. Syd's state could be seen as symbolic of the general state of Pink Floyd: fragmented.'

By turns awkward and poignant, laudatory and condescending, the lyrics to 'Shine on You Crazy Diamond' reflected ambivalence. Depending on one's interpretation, 'Shine on' was a plea to Syd to get himself together and shine, or even a belaboured apology. Waters used a Barrett-like word concatenation in one of the song's phrases and commented, 'Syd was seriously cut up by winds that were wafting in through those early days of rock'n'roll. He was carved by it.'

On 5 June 1975 an unusual visitor dropped into the final day of sessions for *Wish You Were Here*. Engineer John Leckie, sitting in the control room at Studio Three, recalled, 'Roger was singing, checking takes, behind the glass. This fat bald-headed guy came in with a carrier bag, in an old white vinyl trench coat, with a toothbrush in his pocket. The tape stopped and Roger started pointing through the glass. Waters said, "No, who's the other bloke next to you?" I looked over and I couldn't believe there was Syd. I'd last seen him on sessions I'd engineered. This strange grinning person. I said, "Hey Syd, how are you doing?" and he just smiled. We didn't talk.'

'No one recognised him,' David Gilmour said. 'This bloke wandering the studio floor. He came into the control room and he was large, fat and

bald.'

'I walked into the studio at Abbey Road, Roger was sitting, mixing at the desk,' recalled Wright. 'I saw this big bald guy sitting on the couch behind. About sixteen stone, huge bald fat guy. I didn't think anything of it. In those days, it was normal for strangers to wander into our sessions. I thought, "He looks a bit strange." I sat down with Roger at the desk and we worked for about ten minutes. This guy kept on getting up and brushing his teeth and then sitting, doing weird things, but keeping quiet. I said to Roger, "Who is he?" Roger said, "I don't know." I said, "Well, I assumed he was a friend of yours." He said, "No, I don't know who he is."

'It took me a long time. Then suddenly I realised it was Syd, after maybe forty-five minutes. He came in as we were doing vocals for "Shine on You Crazy Diamond", about Syd. He for some reason picked the day we were doing a song about him. A huge shock. I hadn't seen him for about six years. Then at one point, he stood up and said, "Right, when do I put my guitar on?" Of course, he didn't have a guitar with him. We said, "Sorry Syd, the guitar's all done." That's what's so incredibly weird about this guy. Disturbing, as well, particularly when you see a guy and you don't recognise him – very strange. He'd shaven all his hair off – his eyebrows, everything. Awful. Roger was in tears, we both were. Shocking, seven years of no contact, and then to walk in while we're doing that track. Coincidence, karma, fate – who knows, very powerful.'

'They had been at the studio for hours before we got there,' recounted singer Venetta Williams to former mod and UFO attendee Colin Turner. 'While we were there, Syd came into the studio. Everything stopped. We were all shocked to see him and the way he looked. He looked as if on medication, dazed. He didn't say anything while the session was going on. He just listened. No one knew what to say to him. The vibe was tense for a few minutes. Then we got back to work. Syd stayed for a while and then left.'

In *Mind Over Matter*, Storm Thorgerson wrote of Syd: 'Looking terrible, his head shaven, eyes sunken, complexion jaundiced, his body fat, asking awkwardly if he could be of any help.'

'Syd knew exactly what he was doing and he knew we were there,' asserted Waters. 'David said, "Have you clocked it yet?" and I thought,

“It’s Syd.” Strange.’ Pink Floyd played the track back several times, looking for minute flaws in the vocal tracks. Barrett is said to have commented, ‘Why bother? You’ve heard it once already.’ If the subject of the song registered with Syd, he didn’t let on. ‘When the song ended Roger Waters turned to Syd and said, “Well, Syd, what do you think of that?” recalled Jerry Shirley. ‘Syd said, “Sounds a bit old.”’

Though the Floyd could not have known, Barrett offering to add guitar to the track would be his final musical offering. That Pink Floyd did not let Syd Barrett put guitar onto their premature eulogy to him was unfortunate. The year before, the band had spent considerable time using household objects to make music. They could have set aside their much-vaunted musicianship and let Syd zip off a *glissandi* with his toothbrush. A perfect metaphor for psychedelia’s instinctive flash versus prog rock’s ponderous perfection.

‘He did say, “When do you want me to put the guitar on?”’ confirmed Wright. ‘We couldn’t do anything after that. We couldn’t record or play music. We went down to the canteen, had a cup of tea and tried to have a conversation with him. God knows what we talked about. Then he stood up and said, “I’ve got to go now.” And that was it.’

‘He turned up for a couple of days,’ explained Gilmour. ‘Then wandered off and we never saw him again. This strange person walking around the studio, sitting in the control room with us for hours. A close friend of yours for years and years. No one in Pink Floyd recognised him. Eventually, I had sussed it. Even knowing, you couldn’t recognise him. He came two or three days and then he didn’t come anymore.’

Barrett could not have picked a better day to visit. A host of faces from the past had been invited for a reception at the Abbey Road canteen. Jerry Shirley said, ‘They were putting finishing touches on *Wish You Were Here*. Earlier that day David Gilmour had got married and they had to work, so EMI had this round table dinner in the canteen for them. Across the table from me was this overweight Hare Krishna-looking chap. I looked at David and he smiled. Then I realised it was Syd. Close to two hundred pounds and no hair on his head. A shock. I plucked up enough courage to say, “Hello.” I introduced my wife and he laughed. I asked him what he was doing lately. “Oh, you know, not much, eating, sleeping. I get up, eat, and go for a walk, sleep.”’

Peter Jenner said, ‘I wandered into the control room, looked over at this slightly weird-looking person and sat down next to Roger, who leaned over and said, “Do you know who that guy is?” “No,” I said. “Isn’t he a friend of yours?” “Think,” said Roger. “Think!”

‘I looked and suddenly it dawned on me. “Syd?” I looked round. Roger had tears in his eyes. Terribly sad. This great fat, bald, mad person who we used to know and who this song was all about sitting there in another world. Weird. He kept brushing his teeth with this little toothbrush. I asked him what he’d been doing. He just smiled. What I’d call “barking mad”, terribly distressing.’

Andrew King walked up and blurted, ‘Good God, its Syd! How did you get so fat?’ Barrett, in a classic rejoinder, responded, ‘I’ve got a fat fridge in the kitchen and I’ve been eating many pork chops.’

‘To see this great, fat, bald, mad person, the first day he came I was in fucking tears,’ admitted Waters. ‘“Shine on You Crazy Diamond” was […] a symbol for extremes of absence some people have to indulge in because the only way they can cope with how fucking sad modern life is to withdraw completely. I found that terribly sad.

‘It couldn’t have happened without him. On the other hand, it couldn’t have gone on with him. I wanted “Shine on You Crazy Diamond” to get as close as possible to what I felt. That indefinable, inevitable melancholy about the disappearance of Syd. Because he’s left, withdrawn so far away that, as far as we’re concerned, he’s no longer there. Syd wore out his welcome with random precision.’

Any romantic image of artistic madness was far removed from dull reality, a grim situation where loss of control becomes a complex trap. Overloaded sensation paralysed Barrett’s exquisite intuition. The insight and heightened awareness that powered his genius had been squandered. Syd’s sister Rosemary had a different view of her brother’s visit. She felt that his white outfit, shaved head and eyebrows were meant in jest. Judging by Barrett’s comments, the theory is plausible. The Madcap had the last laugh.

In retrospect, it is likely he had come to say his farewells, to see Studio Three one last time, to say goodbye to his bandmates, for whom – despite the way they’d treated him, and way he’d treated them – all was forgiven. Roger Barrett walked out of the studios, down the steps, across

the gravel driveway, past the guard at the gate and down Abbey Road for the last time. Some recall him standing at the gates, waiting for someone to offer him a lift. When no ride was forthcoming, he walked to the tube stop, and returned home to Chelsea, leaving the site of his triumphs and abdication. The next day, Pink Floyd left for America. Two nights later, they performed 'Shine on You Crazy Diamond' to a stadium full of fans in Atlanta. Syd was cloistered at home.

Barrett withdrew, and his withdrawal was complete. Cast in the mould of a romantic figure, his 'madness' became such a part of his myth that disentangling fact from fiction proved difficult. In his legend, his insanity and genius were exaggerated. DJ Nicky Horne profiled Pink Floyd for London's Capital Radio at the end of 1976. He interviewed group, producers and managers, and wanted to include Syd. He went to find him at the Hilton and found a bald man, Syd, who told him, 'Syd can't talk.' Syd would never talk again. Pink Floyd rose to global stardom, playing stadiums in America with ever-expanding lightshows, special effects and props. The music changed focus. 'We stopped trying to make overtly "spacey" music and trip people out in that way in the sixties,' said David Gilmour. 'That image hangs on and we can't seem to get shot of it.'

Floyd concerts became a refuge for stoned and tripping fans. Before massive fame struck, their shows were unique for still and quiet audiences. Now a loud contingent came for a good time without a clue or care what songs were about. 'We don't want people to be stoned out of their minds all the time when they go to hear us,' said Waters. 'We'd like to induce an experience without drugs. Anyone is free to have that kind of experience.'

On Pink Floyd's 1977 album *Animals*, Waters created a menagerie of worms, pigs, hapless sheep and dogs straight from *Animal Farm*. Where Barrett delighted in nature, such ruminations seemed antithetical to Waters's visions of order and commentaries on inner damage. With *Animals* in shops that sweltering summer, young malcontent John Lydon walked down the King's Road wearing a T-shirt with the Pink Floyd logo. Above, he'd scrawled, 'I HATE'. (In 2007, Lydon commented to *Uncut*: 'The whole "I Hate Pink Floyd Thing" was hilarious. Anyone who took that seriously needs a new head. As it happens, I love early Pink Floyd with Syd Barrett – the original Sid Vicious, by the way.')

Re-christened Johnny Rotten, with the Sex Pistols, Lydon was soon shouting taut three-minute rants against Queen, country and hippy excess. He complained that ageing hipsters were still swanning about King's Road as though the sixties were in full swing, while the climate was so far from peace and love as to suggest imminent anarchy and chaos. As Glam trendies frolicked around uncollected rubbish under flickering lights, punks and teds fought with knifes. Battles between police and black youths in Notting Hill turned to riots. At the carnival in September, a legacy of London Free School, several hundred were injured and arrested.

All that anger flared into punk rock. Punk drew from American bands such as the Stooges, the Monks, New York Dolls and the Ramones; also Britain's own Creation, and the Flies. Syd Barrett's Pink Floyd were a particular influence on Damned guitarist Captain Sensible, as well as Richard Lloyd of New York's Television. Sex Pistols manager Malcolm McLaren tried to rent the old UFO for Pistols gigs and even knocked on Barrett's door at the Cloisters to ask him to produce the Pistols' debut album.

Punk, despite its avowed nihilism, was tremendously creative, breaking through the boredom of the seventies in a fury of safety-pinned DIY invention. Women and gays pushed to the fore and integrated into the front ranks. 'Punk was good because it bought me back to UFO club days,' observed Wright. 'At last, I thought something had come along pushing boundaries. I didn't like the music. I liked the whole movement and Malcolm McLaren and Vivienne Westwood. I was flattered when the Floyd were criticised by some punk bands. It didn't bother me.'

Pink Floyd were seen as icons of the progressive era, along with Yes and Emerson, Lake and Palmer. Ponderous length replaced brevity and concision and pompous waffle replaced sharp impact. Soft Machine also lost much fire and strangeness as the original members fell away one by one. After their fourth album, the band sank into jazz-rock noodling, as did Gong after Daevid Allen's exit.

Barrett's music began a long period of reassessment, beyond third-hand tales of Syd trying on three pairs of pants and insisting they all fit. David Bowie captured the crest of new appreciation of Syd Barrett. His epochal *Low* album featured 'Be My Wife', a Barrett-like paean to

domestic bliss. Similarly, Brian Eno's 'Spider and I' from *Before and After Science* (1977) was successful at conjuring Syd-like chords and lyrics.

In 1978, Kris DiLorenzo analysed Barrett's life and times for American rock magazine *Trouser Press*. Her article was among the first to avoid myth-making and focus on Barrett's music. DiLorenzo studied Barrett's innovations, mapped his wide-ranging influence and gave him his proper due. When discussions of Barrett's music, lyrics and experimental technique outnumber picaresque tales of madness, the process that DiLorenzo began will be complete.

Punk rock was far from Barrett's mind as he continued his cloistered life. At the height of punk, in summer 1977, Barrett ran into Gala Pinion, his one-time fiancée, at a supermarket. Pinion paid a brief visit to his flat, as Barrett fixed tea in the kitchen. Gala felt oppressed by the dingy dwelling, with its dimmed lights in the afternoon, curtained windows and stale atmosphere. Pinion fled after Syd made a crude sexual proposition ('Right, then, get your knickers down – how much?'), cruelly telling Gala she was no better than a prostitute, Barrett's conflicts with women had not abated an iota, rather they had concretised into lingering resentment.

Syd visited Cambridge on occasion. One sighting was by a fellow called Rich from Peterborough. 'I saw him in a local Cambridge pub in 1978. I was with a friend who knew Syd in the sixties. She whispered, "My God, there's Syd." Despite cropped hair, lumberjack shirt and pint of Guinness, it was Syd all right. Syd looked up, took one look at my friend and was gone in a trice. He clearly didn't like being recognised.'

Barrett's drawings from this time reflect his state of mind – a solitary figure stands facing away to the horizon, alone in a kaleidoscope of colours and lines. 'He lived in Chelsea Cloisters for some years,' explained Rosemary. 'A bad time, he was very lonely. Money became a problem, because brown envelopes went straight into the bin.'

In November 1979, Pink Floyd released *The Wall*, a double album with the bulk of its music and lyrics written by Roger Waters. Three movements were interwoven to form a compelling, if bleak, masterpiece. The first movement was an elegy for Roger Waters's father, Eric Fletcher

Waters, whose senseless death at the beachhead in Anzio shaped much of Waters's worldview, as well as a melancholy meditation on Waters's own unhappy schooling and loneliness as a child.

Orchestrations contrast with acoustic songs detailing alienation and sadness. The second movement was a caustic analysis of the travails of fame and success, as 'Pink Floyd', an archetypal rock star, retreated into isolation and madness. Waters combined his own experiences, and vignettes from other rock performers, such as Roy Harper, to shape a harrowing depiction of Syd Barrett's downfall.

In the third movement, Waters constructed an operetta, recalling composer Kurt Weill and playwright Bertolt Brecht's *Threepenny Opera*, to explore links between rock'n'roll and fascism. Waters also used elements of John Gay's *The Beggar's Opera*.

Pink Floyd performed the album across a series of monumental shows, with a brutalist wall built across the stage, each brick symbolising the fictional Pink's growing alienation. Concerts were a high mark of Waters's theatrical ambitions, which had been building since Games for May. In 1982, a film of *The Wall* premiered. Bob Geldof, of Irish group the Boomtown Rats, portrayed the fictional Pink Floyd. Waters said, 'Syd appears in *The Wall* a lot. In the movie where the cigarette burns down between the fingers, I went into the room and saw that. My friendship with him and his illness combined provide an enormous opportunity for grief. Sad, very sad; I was mourning the loss of Syd as friend and colleague.'

The album's standout track, 'Comfortably Numb' was one of few with music credited to Gilmour. Phil Salathé notes: 'Chords to the chorus of "Comfortably Numb" resemble a transposed, elaborated version of the beginning of "Opel". Verses of "Comfortably Numb" bear resemblance in bass-line trajectory to "Interstellar Overdrive". Both echo the lament form common in the early Baroque period, with descending ground bass, particularly "Dido's Lament" from Henry Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas*.'

'"Comfortably Numb" is about the living-death condition people find when life seems unreal and they can't work out why,' explained Waters. 'I remember having a fever when I was a child and characterising the recurrent feeling of numbness, a delirium you can't put your finger on. A feeling I think you get when you're going crazy, probably – everything

suddenly is wrong. For Syd, it must have felt much like that. Apart from tangible, explainable manifestations of schizophrenia, like hearing voices, there's [the] discomfort of everything not being right. Almost beyond bearing.

'On the couple of occasions where I have felt myself approaching mental breakdown it felt like delirium. My connection with how Syd or other schizophrenics must feel is taken from that childhood memory and odd moments in my life of great personal stress when I have experienced edges of that same feeling.'

No longer was madness addressed as a cliché, with wires in the brain or scalpels raised for lobotomies. Waters could feel Syd in himself. As his marriage disintegrated during the *Wish You Were Here* sessions, Waters had a dissociative episode in the canteen at Abbey Road. He felt that he was having a nervous breakdown. 'Everything went down the other end of a telescope. I thought, "Fuck me, I'm going mad."' There were strong elements of regret and anger underpinning *The Wall*, and laments for failed relationships recurred at intervals across the album. Waters's reminisces of Barrett were, at times, coruscating. Hamstrung between spite and sorrow, on 'Nobody Home' Waters recalled Syd's 'obligatory' Hendrix perm, and the elastic bands holding his Gohill boots together.

In December 2009, Roger Waters told *Mojo* magazine: 'The Gohill boots are Syd, the Hendrix perm a *gestalt*. Rick had one. Syd had one. Eric Clapton had one. It was a thing at the time.'

'Don't Leave Me Now', a caustic plea mixed with a threat, resonated with Barrett's difficult relationships with women. Waters sang in pealing echo, uncannily evocative of Barrett's yearning loneliness on 'Dark Globe', whose spectral form also shadowed Waters's 'Mother'. 'The connection to "Dark Globe" is substantive,' Salathé asserts. '"Mother", "Pigs on the Wing", and "Two Suns in the Sunset", incorporate time-signature changes all over Syd solo albums, "Scarecrow" and "Scream Thy Last Scream". Also John Lennon's "Happiness Is a Warm Gun", "She Said She Said" and *Plastic Ono Band*. Songs heavily shaped, metrically speaking, by their texts. Alone with an acoustic guitar, Waters drifted Syd-ward. When it's you and a guitar, you can follow your own vagaries much more easily than if Mason is saying, "What bloody meter is this thing in?"'

Peter Jenner was unimpressed with *The Wall*: 'I don't want to hear about him and his whinging on about how his Dad died and his guilt feelings about Syd. He's done that over and over again.' With hindsight, Gilmour felt that *The Wall* was a catalogue of complaints Waters sought to vent against slights, imagined or real, from people in his past. Jenner and King, for their part, now managed the Clash.

In 1980, when Barrett walked into the Blackhill office, Jenner didn't recognise him at first. Syd brandished a passport application and said he needed an employer's signature. Jenner said, 'You wanted to help him, but you couldn't.'

Roaming the Harrods food hall in Knightsbridge to buy sweets, Syd was spotted by Roger Waters. The encounter proved uncomfortable for both. Barrett dropped his bags of candy and fled to the lift. Waters told the *Mirror*: 'The last time I saw him was a couple of years after he turned up at the *Wish You Were Here* sessions. I bumped into him in Harrods, where he used to go to buy sweets. We didn't speak – he sort of scuttled away.'

Another possible encounter with Barrett took place at a most unexpected location. Alex Gunningham, manager of the reformed Purple Gang, recalls, 'I met Syd briefly once, outside the former UFO club in Tottenham Court Road, around 1981. He was staring at the marquee, then "Available for Private Dining and Parties". Syd was obese, balding and looked weary. I approached him and asked if he was okay. He asked whether this had been UFO once. Once reassured, he wanted to go in and see the club but was plainly too shy. I asked one of the staff, preparing the venue for a lunchtime function, if it was all right if we had a quick look with a view to future hire. Once inside where UFO had been, Syd's face lit up.

'"This place used to be so alive, so full of fire and colour," he said. In that moment, so was Syd. His bubble was burst as we were gently asked to leave so tables could be laid for lunch. Outside the club, Syd politely declined my offer of a drink and thanked me. "Been wanting to do that for years," he said before happily shuffling north, possibly toward Cambridge.'

Which makes for a nice story, save for the fact that the cinema that housed UFO was demolished in 1976.

In 1981, Barrett landed at his mother's doorstep at St Margaret's Square. Poor diet and stress had given him severe stomach ulcers. Despite drinking milk to coat his stomach, Syd sat at the Cloisters in crippling pain, but lacked the presence of mind to visit a doctor. A peptic gastric ulcer landed him in Addenbrooke's for an operation.

Recovering, he settled into the smaller back bedroom upstairs at Winifred's home. The semi-detached 1930s house had seen few changes in intervening decades, save for a garish sprayed stone finish to the front. Situated off Cherry Hinton Road, one and a half miles south-east of the city centre, Barrett had access to whatever his limited needs dictated. Excepting short stretches away, he spent almost half his life at 6 Margaret's Square. 'He came home to stay with mum,' recalled Rosemary. 'He was distressed for years and years and years – probably ten-years-plus of chaos. He, after some years, sorted himself out and he got himself a life with me and my mother.'

The Cambridge he knew and loved was under siege, the old Kite area saw Victorian buildings demolished for a shopping centre and cinema complex, the eyesore Grafton Centre. Despite fierce local resistance, city council, landowners Jesus College and developers Grosvenor Estates won.

Neighbour David Sore, then six, lived next door in the subdivided house with his family. His first impression of Barrett was memorable. Syd emerged from the house with gardening tools and sawed down a tree in the front garden. He hacked away bushes ringing the tree stump, lugged the branches into the backyard, and burnt them in a bonfire, sending smoke billowing over St Margaret's Square. Sore noted each time bushes grew back Barrett hacked and burnt them with obsessive regularity.

Barrett's moods were changeable. Often silent, he could easily turn angry. Neighbours complaining about bonfires were met with, in Sore's account, a blank stare, or swearing and abuse. Sore alleges that Barrett had fits of temper, and took to throwing mugs, ashtrays, and saucepans through windows, leaving broken glass scattered across the front lawn.

As night fell, Barrett's inner demons sometimes got the better of him and he had fits of anger. To tabloid the *Daily Mail*, Sore claimed, 'Syd screamed in extreme rages lasting twenty to forty minutes many nights, often of wanting to kill Roger Waters. Syd burnt every tree and bush in a stunning garden previously owned by someone who worked at the Botanical Gardens. Syd smashed his own furniture and windows so many times. As a young child, this was spine-chilling. I simply knew Syd as Roger the mad person living next door.'

During a period of frustration and anger, on one occasion, Barrett exploded in a rage, smashing his own belongings. Sore's parents rang the police, who stopped Syd's raging, and once satisfied his anger had subsided, left.

Despite this behaviour, Syd never lifted a hand in anger against anyone else or their property. Attacks of anger cropped up periodically over the next years. The screaming and shouting, in Sore's view, was 'an incessant howling, more animal-like than human. Incoherent, angry shrieking but occasionally words could be distinguished – always the same, "Fucking Roger Waters! I'm going to fucking kill him."' Rosemary confirmed that her brother harboured a resentment of Waters. 'He prefers not to talk about Pink Floyd. When he does, he never calls them "Pink Floyd", but "the band". For him, they are his band. More than once I saw him get angry and shout Roger Waters's name thinking about past experiences.'

Sore alleges that on one occasion Winifred Barrett rang the police herself. Syd was taken away in restraints to nearby Fulbourn Hospital. Interviewed by staff psychiatrists, he returned home after a few days observation. No formal diagnosis was made and no treatment deemed suitable.

'He had an anger attack,' explained Rosemary. 'He used to lose control owing to his frustration and would become violent, not to people, but household objects. Difficult to know what we should do with him. The police came once, and stopped him. Later they didn't know what to do with him and took him to the psychiatric hospital. He stayed there two nights and doctors said he didn't suffer from mental illness.'

Barrett had follow-up sessions with a psychiatrist at Fulbourn, though neither medication nor therapy was given.

In summer 1982, Barrett returned for a brief stay at Chelsea Cloisters, less a final try to live on his own means than to close shop. In his last oscillation between London and Cambridge, he stayed a few weeks before returning. He packed a scant few belongings in a carrier bag and gave or threw away his guitars, recordings from sessions, furniture and television sets. He closed the door and turned his back on London, with memories of life there trailing him home. A penitential pilgrimage in reverse, Barrett fled the Grail. The bright lights of the big city had failed him.

Legend holds that he walked home, and for once, the myth is true. Barrett undertook the arduous fifty-mile return walk to Cambridge. Rosemary recalled that her exhausted brother had ‘an awful lot of blisters’.

With the film of *The Wall* in theatres, Thomas Johnson, reporter from French magazine *Actuel*, with photographer Janet Beckman in tow, set out to find the Madcap, stirring a pilgrimage by misguided fans and gawkers, which continued unabated for the rest of Barrett’s life.

At Chelsea Cloisters, all they found was a bag of laundry Barrett left behind. Contriving to return the bag, they went to St Margaret’s Square and rang the bell. A man in his mid-thirties opened the door, dressed smartly in polo shirt and jeans, hair short cropped and thinning. He looked fit and healthy, having lost excess weight after his operation. Except for his penetrating eyes, nothing hinted this man was anything other than a suburban burgher. The encounter could well have been a page torn from a Eugène Ionesco play from the Theatre of the Absurd.

> Johnson: What are you doing now? Do you paint?
>
> Barrett: No. I’ve just had an operation, but nothing too serious. I’m trying to go back down there, but I’ve got to wait. There’s a train strike at the moment.
>
> Johnson: That’s been over now for several weeks.
>
> Barrett: Oh, good! Thanks very much

Johnson: What did you do in the apartment in London? Do you play guitar?

Barrett: No. No, I watch TV, that's all.

Johnson: Don't you want to play anymore?

Barrett: No, not really. I don't have time to do very much. I must find myself a flat in London. But it's difficult; I'll have to wait. [*From time to time, he looks at the clothes and smiles*] I didn't think I'd get these things back. I knew I couldn't write. I couldn't have made my mind up to go and get them, to get the train and all that. But then I didn't even write to them. Mum said she'd get in touch with the office. Thanks, anyway. [*Jumpy when he realised the reporters knew who he was, nervously trying to end the conversation, Barrett's eyes darted toward the house*]

Johnson: Do you remember Duggie?

Barrett: Uh, yes. I never saw him again. I'm not going to see anyone in London.

Johnson: All your friends say 'hello'.

Barrett: Ah, thanks. That's nice.

Johnson: Can I take a photo of you?

Barrett: Yeah, sure. [*Posing for photos one last time, he fastened his collar and smiled*] Good, that's enough now. It's painful for me. Thank you. [*Standing awkwardly with the reporters, Barrett stared at the tree in front of the house. Obvious the conversation was going nowhere*]

Johnson: It's nice, that tree.

> Barrett: Yes, but not anymore. They cut it, not long ago. Before that, I liked it a lot. [*Agitated*] Good, there you are. Maybe we'll see each other in London. Bye!

During 1983-84, Barrett spent eighteen months at Greenwoods, a National Health Service treatment facility in Brentwood, Essex. Greenwoods offered in-patient rehabilitation for people with 'severe and enduring mental health problems and associated behavioural problems'. There was no formal therapy programme save for occupational therapy, which Barrett enjoyed. He wove baskets and painted, loath to mix with other patients.

The Reverend William Messenger's *Greenwood Years* describes Syd's time at the centre: 'There was a sense of tragedy whenever a victim of drugs arrived too late to be helped. Damage to brain and body was irreparable. One of them had been a founder member of a world-famous pop music group; his compositions took them to the top of the charts. [Barrett]'s father was a highly respected doctor, and there was little doubt about caring support of the family. At art college in London [Barrett] was first introduced to LSD and its open door into the psychedelic world. These experiences empowered the music that packed concert halls, sold millions of records and set crowds of devotees on the trail of the group. We were warned if his presence in Greenwoods were known queues of pilgrims would be forming at the gate. Relentless erosion of drugs dramatically curtailed [Barrett]'s sensational career. During a concert in New York, he suddenly stopped playing and walked offstage, abandoning his friends. That finished the show and [Barrett]'s place in the group. Medical treatment failed to reclaim his mental health. By the time he reached Greenwoods he appeared utterly lost, inarticulate and with little control of his own affairs. He attended group sessions and took part in the work programme but resisted attempts to involve him socially. Our son Robert almost succeeded during the party evening on holiday. He handed [Barrett] his guitar, inviting him to play. We watched as his fingers closed round the guitar and [he] held it; then, with a shake of his head, he released his grip and handed it back. Sadly, a sign we had to accept, a fire had gone out and nothing could rekindle it.'

Ian Barrett recalled, ‘I remember going to visit Rog in some rehabilitation home out in the country and going for a walk with him through some woods. I didn’t have any idea what he might be in there for. All I remember is the house looked scary.’ At Greenwoods, the programme aimed to re-establish patients’ connections with others. Still, Barrett did not have to cook nor clean, unprepared to interact, or help.

Physicians at Greenwoods are said to have diagnosed Barrett as having ‘personality disorder’, a class of mental illness characterised by rigid thought and action. One variant was borderline personality disorder, coined by the pharmaceutical-psychiatric complex for those not easily pinned into categories outlined in the DSM-IIIR manual. Though sanity cannot be affixed along a spectrum, or tallied on a scorecard, the term was apt in describing Barrett’s shaky position on the border between sanity and madness, much as he alluded to in his image of the mad cat laughing at a lone man stood on some unknown boundary.

Barrett took offence at some slight – imagined or real – from staff or patients, and left for home.

15. HOME

‘As he hurried along, eagerly anticipating the moment when he would be at home again among the things he knew and liked, the Mole saw clearly that he was an animal of tilled field and hedge-row, linked to the ploughed furrow, the frequented pasture, the lane of evening lingerings, the cultivated garden-plot. For others the asperities, the stubborn endurance, or the clash of actual conflict, that went with Nature in the rough; he must be wise, must keep to the pleasant places in which his lines were laid and which held adventure enough, in their way, to last for a lifetime.’

The Wind in the Willows
Kenneth Grahame, 1908

‘In the grim comedy of life, it has been wisely said that the last laugh is the best.’

He Who Gets Slapped
Victor Sjöström, 1924

With Pink Floyd often in the news as Waters battled his ex-bandmates in an acrimonious dispute over rights to the franchise, between 1984 and 1987, Barrett continued to shout Waters’s name in anger. The bonfires, glass-smashing and shouting continued for another year or so. Neighbour David Sore recalled, ‘He periodically smashed and burnt his artwork – psychedelic paintings, vaguely reminiscent of Jackson Pollock. Bonfires were huge, with flames seven- or eight-feet high, sending thick white smoke over the whole street. Syd’s mum, friendly with my parents, was always apologetic but she could do nothing to control him.’ Clearly Syd needed more space, so his mother went to stay with Paul and Rosemary Breen, on a temporary basis that became permanent.

Barrett's world had shrunk to a few rooms. An entrance hall opened onto a living room, leading to a dining room with a sealed fireplace. A large kitchen looked into the garden. Alone in the house, Barrett had three bedrooms to choose from, and occupied whichever took his fancy. The bedrooms each measured about thirteen by eleven feet, with the front one facing the square, and back two overlooking the garden. He turned the two reception rooms into an art room and hobby workspace.

Behind the house a glorious, outsize rectangular garden extended one hundred and ten feet, fenced in with six-foot-high wooden planks. The garden had an immense variety of mature shrubs, bushes and trees with well-stocked borders, and a garden storage shed filled with tools. The previous owners had worked at the Cambridge University Botanic Garden, and cultivated their garden with care. From a bench there, Barrett sat undisturbed and watched clouds drift over the house in summertime. Three times the size of his house, the garden became his Eden, an island of sanity in a mad world.

The success of *The Wall* stirred ever-greater numbers of fans to seek Syd out, many as confused as he was. The despised 'door steppers' pestered Barrett for decades. A steady stream of misguided fans knocked, only to catch a glimpse of a bald, stout, ageing man. Barrett would answer the door, say, 'No thanks,' and slam the door shut. For twenty years, they sought him out at an average of once a week.

Barrett shunned contact with his neighbours, save for the occasional 'hello', otherwise he walked past, looking at the ground. He kept his head and eyebrows shaved and remained stocky, at times obese. He wore baggy short pants, tennis shoes and singlet, like a truant schoolboy might. Sartorial affairs were reduced to essentials.

David Sore noted, 'He physically deteriorated after his mother's departure. He wouldn't bother buttoning his shirt, if he bothered wearing one at all. He wore trousers that were way too big for him. He looked dishevelled. We sometimes saw him walking down the road wearing only his pyjama bottoms.' Barrett cooked his own meals, though he often became distracted and wandered off. As at Wetherby Mansions, he forgot lamb chops on the stove and flames licked the ceiling while smoke poured from the kitchen windows.

When Barrett let the guitar go at Greenwoods, a new generation of fans picked it up. In the post-punk era, a contingent of admirers saw Pink Floyd as dinosaurs. (Daniel Ash of Bauhaus and Love and Rockets said, 'Syd Barrett stuff, yeah, but all the other stuff, that's a different thing.') Barrett's angular and abstract guitar appealed more to bands such as Public Image Ltd and Gang of Four than Gilmour's clean lines. Guitarists Keith Levene of PiL, Andy Gill of the Gang of Four and John McGeogh of Magazine and Siouxsie & the Banshees showed Syd's influence. Will Sergeant of Echo & the Bunnymen also displayed a strong Syd influence in his elegiac single-note leads, noting, 'This includes much early Syd Barrett stuff. I've also got a blue vinyl bootleg of "Vegetable Man" and "Scream Thy Last Scream".

Stirring melodic crosses between rhythm and lead by Robert Smith of the Cure owed much to Syd Barrett. A new generation were queuing up to pay tribute to Syd: Paul Weller, at the height of his powers with the Jam, said, 'I'll tell you a guitarist I do like, and that's Syd Barrett.' Roger Miller of Mission of Burma declared, 'To me, Hendrix and Syd were my main guitar guys.' East Bay Ray of the Dead Kennedys asserted, 'My favourite electric guitar players of all time are Syd Barrett, Muddy Waters and Jimi Hendrix.' Barrett's influence blazes across Wire's *Chairs Missing*.

Robyn Hitchcock and the Soft Boys covered 'Vegetable Man' in 1980. On tour, they covered 'Astronomy Dominé' and 'Gigolo Aunt'. Dismissed by early reviewers as a Barrett copyist, Hitchcock proved to be an alarmingly original songwriter in his own right. To his credit, he made no bones about Syd's influence on his music.

Colin Moulding of XTC noted, 'I was becoming enamoured with Syd Barrett. *The Piper at the Gates of Dawn* was different; it took many chances. Syd Barrett has a thing where the meter of the song is the length of his sentence – no straight meters. When he stops singing, that's the end of the bar. His approach seemed free form, an interesting way of writing a song. It rubbed off on me.'

Ex-Soft Cell singer Marc Almond covered 'Terrapin' with his underrated ensemble Marc and the Mambas, while Love and Rockets did 'Lucifer Sam'. The Jesus and Mary Chain made a boots-and-black-

leather stomp from ‘Vegetable Man’. Television Personalities recorded ‘I Know Where Syd Barrett Lives’.

Barrett’s influence shone. Syd’s Floyd were one of the dark undercurrents of sixties music adopted by subsequent generations, along with the Velvet Underground, Nico, the Doors, the Monks, the Godz, the 13th Floor Elevators and Love.

In the nineties, Primal Scream, Blur and Radiohead sung Syd’s praises and incorporated his unique tone into their own songs. The Melvins rampaged through ‘Interstellar Overdrive’, while the Smashing Pumpkins took a turn at ‘Terrapin’. Chris Cornell of Soundgarden covered ‘Dark Globe’ in concert. John Frusciante of the Red Hot Chili Peppers adored Syd. Cedric Bixler-Zavala of the Mars Volta said, ‘He’s the original punk. I can’t even think of how much he’s influenced what we do. I always dug his guitar playing, but I loved his lyrics. His music, especially his solo albums, those really made me want to make songs like that.’ Barrett’s vaporised riffs and revolutionary echo technique found their way into the music of bands such as My Bloody Valentine and Slowdive. Richard Ashcroft of the Verve had an acid-induced vision of Syd lying in a sleeping bag behind a recording console while recording. David Roback of Rain Parade and Mazzy Star acknowledged the formative influence of Barrett’s abstract guitar style. REM recorded a powerful cover of ‘Dark Globe’. Roger Waters recalled being given the cold shoulder by Michael Stipe backstage at an REM gig in London, who went onstage and did ‘Dark Globe’ *a cappella* as an encore. Waters observed that it was ‘his way of saying, “Syd was all right but you’re an arsehole.”’ Many hundreds of covers of Barrett’s songs are floating around. A 2006 competition sponsored by David Gilmour garnered two hundred versions of ‘Arnold Layne’ alone.

The corpus of unreleased Syd songs in EMI’s vaults caused a steady stream of petitions demanding they be issued. Ivor Trueman’s *Opel* fanzine led the charge. Malcolm Jones, now in failing health, took up the cause with commendable vigour. EMI gave him the constant run around, never returning his calls. Jones wrote four times, then rang and said, ‘Look, two record companies I know of want the stuff, are you interested or are you not?’ The head of A&R’s secretary would say, ‘Oh he’s gone to lunch and won’t be coming back today.’

Diagnosed with liver cancer, Jones kept up the pressure. In August 1987, he was finally able to return to Abbey Road to compile rough mixes of Syd's solo material, plus the two most famous unreleased Floyd tracks, 'Vegetable Man', and 'Scream Thy Last Scream'. Jones died before he could see an album's worth of out-takes and unreleased tracks issued as *Opel* in 1988. 'I've listened to *Opel* and there's nothing on there that illuminates much or gives much to anyone,' insisted Dave Gilmour. 'I didn't approve of it, personally, but it's not my choice.'

Roger Waters oscillated between disdain and admiration, emotional involvement and distance. 'I'm very sad about Syd, [though] I wasn't for years. I suppose he was a threat because of all that bollocks written about him and us. He was very important and the group would never have fucking started without him because he was writing all the material. It couldn't have happened without him, but on the other hand, it couldn't have gone on with him. I think I was threatened by him.'

Waters tired of having Syd Barrett brought up in almost every interview. 'I don't know what went wrong with Syd because I am not an expert on schizophrenia. Syd was extraordinarily charming and attractive and alive and talented but whatever happened to him, happened to him.'

On his 1987 solo *Radio K.A.O.S.* tour, Roger Waters screened the 'Arnold Layne' film clip during the intermission. (Derek Nice says, 'I was art directing a movie at Pinewood Studios and Eric Clapton mentioned Roger Waters was keen to know if I still had the original thirty-five millimetre black-and-white promo film for "Arnold Layne". This brought us back in touch.') Waters told audiences, 'The great Syd Barrett, lest we forget.'

Waters confessed to singing Barrett's 'Bike' and 'Dark Globe' in the bath. 'What was so stunning about Syd's songs was, through whimsy and crazy juxtaposition of ideas and words, there was a powerful grasp of humanity,' he observed. 'Quintessentially human songs. What I've always attempted to aspire to. In that sense, I feel a strong connection to him.

'A visionary, an extraordinary musician. He started Pink Floyd. Syd and I started the group together but if he hadn't been there, nothing would have happened. The key that unlocked the door to rock'n'roll for me.'

Waters's attitude softened, as memories of Syd rattling detuned strings faded. In 1987, the bassist told the *Observer*: 'I dreamt about him only last night. It was in the open and he was still gone but I sat down and talked to him and it felt good. He was still saying things I wasn't in a position to understand, but I was supporting him and he was accepting it. We were both happy.'

Oddly enough, in 1987 Barrett seemed to let go of the past. The screaming, breaking and burning stopped. Though he continued to enjoy a bonfire, they became an occasional purgative. Settling into life at 6 Margaret's Square, though dysfunctional, he began a slow improvement.

The unsung heroine of Syd's life was his sister, Rosemary. With dedication born of true love, Rosemary Breen taught her brother how to function again. His carer for almost twenty years, she telephoned his house daily, and took him shopping each week, walked with him round the aisles before driving him home. 'I'd see him two or three times a week,' she explained. 'He needed much support, to learn how to live in many different ways. I had to teach him how to live. He had forgotten you get up, have breakfast, go shopping, come back, and have lunch. The normal routine of a day had never featured in his life. It was a worry, a worry I did take too seriously. I did love him – too much – so he learnt slowly. He was content. This was what I strived for, for him: contentment. I think he achieved it.'

Rekindling his interest in art, Syd purchased a comprehensive overview of abstract expressionism that would stir renewed passion for painting, *The Triumph of American Painting* by Irving Sandler, and a Penguin *Encyclopaedia*, as his inner horizons reopened by degrees. Barrett was spotted going to market or buying art supplies. Most locals did not know who he was. If they did, they left him alone. He was known as a local eccentric, of which Cambridge has no shortage.

For a supposed recluse, Barrett was often sighted, in transit rather than lingering. If hiding, then he hid in plain view, a curious means of disappearing. Barrett's presence in Cambridge was perfectly paradoxical – there, but not there. Gone, but not gone. A will-o'-the-wisp with baleful eyes.

'I don't think we could say he was a recluse, I don't think that's accurate because he didn't generally shun company,' Rosemary mused.

‘He did however become more selective, when he was younger everyone was his friend, after the Floyd I think there was lots of issues and it made him much more wary of human contact. Not everyone had good motives towards him; therefore, I think he became quite suspicious of people.’

Rosemary further explained to the *Cambridge News*: ‘He chose to be reclusive and people respected that. He wanted to live a quiet life. He was allowed to do that in Cambridge, which shows what an enormous respect people had for him. He was always eccentric and exposed it to what was going on in the sixties and ended with a bit of a befuddled brain. He had an odd brain and had access to alternative ways of stimulating it, but he wasn’t mentally ill. He was unique.’

Barrett went to Collins & Hodgeson Dentists on the corner of Cherry Hinton Road and Perne Road. The dental nurse recalled, ‘No one knew who he was. To the staff, he was just a nutty bloke called Roger Barrett who was forever coming in complaining of toothache. He’d turn up, plumpish, in baggy jumpers. Talcum powder on his head spilt onto his clothes, giving the appearance of him being covered in it. He always smelt strongly of flowers. He used to complain about having toothache, yet they could find little wrong with his teeth, which left them convinced his toothache was mostly psychosomatic. He would wait patiently for ages for them to fit him in, and not say a word. Always polite and pleasant, but they found him rather unnerving. They were always trying to get rid of him.’ Barrett was experiencing the early signs of diabetes, with recurrent toothaches being an indicator.

David Gilmour noted that contact with Syd during the eighties was limited to checking whether his royalties were getting to him properly. Gilmour asked Rosemary whether he could visit Barrett. ‘She didn’t think it was a good idea. Things that remind him of his past tend to depress him. If he sees me or other people from that period, he gets depressed for a couple of weeks. It’s not worth it.’

Barrett did not enjoy socialising and found large groups of people disturbing, though he did visit his brother Donald’s home in Luton. ‘He visited us for Christmas which was lovely,’ recalled Ian Barrett. ‘I received an electronic game you could play tunes on as a gift. I have vivid memory of sitting with him on the sofa and teaching him to play

little tunes and games on the toy! No primitive renditions of "See Emily Play" were forthcoming that afternoon.'

In October 1988, following the release of *Opel*, a reporter from tabloid the *News of the World* tracked Barrett to his home. In England, where a premium is placed on privacy, prurient curiosity spurred tabloid invasions. Cynical editors at such newspapers sent hacks to look for the 'Cambridge Madman'. Reporters staked out his little house, lay in wait for him to get on his bicycle for a trip to the art supplies store, then jumped out at him with flash cameras blazing. Barrett's face was pained, annoyed and at times angry, though most often sad and despairing. In an article that encapsulated the worst of the Syd Barrett myth, the *News of the World* noted that Barrett, photographed taking out his rubbish, 'looked like a dirty tramp'. A startled Barrett stood in his nondescript clothes as flies buzzed around his dustbin, looking fearful rather than fearsome. Syd was described as 'a lunatic who barks like a dog'. For Syd, there was always the worry that every reissue, publicity campaign, article or book encouraged more people to bother him.

That month, BBC Radio One interviewed Syd's brother-in-law Paul Breen. Breen stated that Roger Barrett pursued an ordinary lifestyle. 'He's started to develop an interest, again, in painting, originally his main interest.' As for the sixties, 'I think it is part of his life which he prefers to forget now,' added Breen. 'He had some bad experiences. He has come through all the worst of these, and is now able to lead a normal life in Cambridge. There's contentment now he probably hasn't felt since before he got involved in music. He is developing new interests and his painting has progressed as the years go by.'

In 1990, Barrett was granted a disability pension of £40 a week. Neighbour David Sore noted, 'He drank heavily, probably a bottle of whiskey a day. Syd was also an enthusiastic smoker. As a teenager, I worked in the local newsagent. Syd came in almost every day for his cigarettes. He always bought sixty and a different selection every time. He'd take the cigarettes and march off without another word. He never handed over cash but ran up large bills on a tab his sister used to settle. By then, I knew who he was and found it hard to reconcile this middle-

aged recluse, who had huge problems engaging with the world, with the good-looking musician I saw smiling out of early photographs.'

Though her brother could still sometimes be amusing, Rosemary found that his withdrawal made this the exception, rather than the rule. 'Occasionally, if in a good mood, he would be funny again, but it would be rare.'

In 1991, Winifred Barrett died at the age of eighty-six. After Winifred's death, Barrett burnt his childhood journals and paintings in a large bonfire. Unlike other bonfires, this seemed a farewell and purge of the past. He was finally free of his childhood.

If Pink Floyd had embarked on a course that could be seen as being in diametric opposition to the earlier Barrett-led experimental wanderings, when Mason, Gilmour and Wright convened on Gilmour's Astoria houseboat studio for sessions for *The Division Bell*, long improvisational jams were used as the basis of structured songs. If Barrett's 'sound' was not present, the spirit was there, a musical vocabulary from which Pink Floyd sprang.

'Syd was fantastic, a great guy,' asserted Gilmour. 'The Pink Floyd he was in was a different band to the one that came afterwards. If people say we weren't the same after Syd left, fair enough. The first album was English whimsy at its best, with large slices of psychedelia thrown in. It bears little resemblance to anything we've tried to do since.

'In the beginning, songs were all Syd's and they were brilliant. No one disputes that. A fantastic talent. I don't think the actual sound of the whole band stems from Syd. It stems as much from Rick.'

On their 1994 tour, Pink Floyd opened with Barrett's 'Astronomy Dominé', with psychedelic liquid lighting provided by Peter Wynne-Willson. Gilmour told *Guitar World*: 'It wasn't a conscious decision to pay homage to Syd. We've probably paid homage to him quite enough. We wanted to widen the spectrum a little [and] find something we hadn't done before. "Astronomy Dominé" struck us as being a good opening number. Fun to go back and do that, it needed dusting.' Rick Wright added, 'It was fun playing "Astronomy Dominé" because David was trying to play it the way Syd would have done.'

A comparison of original and the live version found on *Pulse* is a telling commentary on the two guitarists' respective styles; Gilmour played leads with a fluid blues feel, but with less of Barrett's inherent dramatics. Nick Mason acknowledged, '"Astronomy Dominé" was chosen as a tribute to Syd, who continues to be an inspiration to us.'

Storm Thorgerson's film for 'Shine on You Crazy Diamond' was screened on Pink Floyd's 1994 world tours and proved to be a searing take on Syd's ascension and fall. Syd is depicted as a young boy, swimming across a lake with a headlamp mounted on a helmet, guided by his inner light, as it were. Welcomed from the water by friends, Syd enters an ornate pavilion where joints are smoked by diaphanous lovelies who swirl around him in silk and velvet. Tarot cards are brandished by mysterious women. Seduced, he loses his light, and tumbles into a psychedelic maelstrom. Wrestling in the water with his doppelgänger, one drowns so the other can live. He falls further down the spiral, landing with a bump in an empty swimming pool, now an old man. The cynical ending marred an otherwise evocative film.

For the sleeve shots of Pink Floyd's final cut *The Division Bell*, Thorgerson and Hipgnosis wanted to expand on the lyrics of 'High Hopes', Gilmour and co-lyricist Polly Samson's meditation on breakdowns in communication refers to Waters and Barrett's silence. A massive bust of Barrett's head, in gilded gold, was erected in a field outside Cambridge. The disparity between the golden godhead with its flowing tresses, and the real Barrett a few miles away, buying paints at Heffers Art & Graphic Shop on King Street, neatly bypassed irony at the A14 junction and set the controls for heart of the absurd.

'Replacing Syd as leader of the Pink Floyd was okay,' mused Waters. 'Syd as a writer was a one-off. I could never aspire to Syd's crazed insights and perceptions. For a long time I wouldn't have dreamt of claiming any insight whatsoever. I'll always credit Syd with the connection he made between his personal unconscious and collective group unconscious. It's taken me fifteen years to get anywhere near there. What enabled Syd to see things in the way he did? Why is an artist an artist? Artists feel and see things in a different way to other people. In a way, a blessing, also a terrible curse. A great satisfaction to be earned from it but often also a terrible burden.

‘Even though clearly out of control when he made his two solo albums, some of the work is staggeringly evocative. The humanity of it’s so impressive, about deeply felt values and beliefs. Maybe that’s what *Dark Side of the Moon* was aspiring to, a similar feeling. I still consider Syd a great primary inspiration. A wonderful human tenderness to all his unique musical flights.’

Waters stated that he felt Syd was ‘extraordinarily creative and full of life before he became ill. Those of us who survived in Pink Floyd owe him a lot. He provided that original flicker of creativity, so important in the beginning. In the beginning, I provided some push. Syd provided that initial spark. He showed me what was possible if you were prepared to take the risk.’

In an affecting glimpse behind Waters’s often cavalier mask, he choked back tears in John Edginton’s 2003 documentary *The Pink Floyd and Syd Barrett Story*. ‘When I’m singing “Shine on You Crazy Diamond”, Syd’s right there all the time. The song is absolutely about him, and describes how I experienced his disintegration. It describes as well the great desire and passion I had then and still have now to celebrate him, his talent and humanity, and express the love I have for him.’

For his part, Gilmour began performing solo acoustic renditions of ‘Terrapin’ at the ‘A Day for Tibet’ event in 1996 and Meltdown at London’s Royal Festival Hall in 2001.

‘I prefer to remember him as this white, thin, violet-eyed nutter who didn’t speak much and wrote wonderful songs,’ declared Jenny Fabian. ‘I knew the others but they were nothing compared to him. His words and his music were the Pink Floyd and I’ve never been interested in them since. Nothing ever reached [the] heights of that first album, mad and mysterious – like him.’

Like Arthur Rimbaud or Nijinsky, Barrett acquitted himself of what he had become. Shaken by sudden fame and the conflict between his art and the demands of commercial pop, Syd’s hypersensitive world was undermined. Unable to weather the downside of sudden adulation, he withdrew into silence and anonymity.

‘Syd went out to lunch and never came back,’ observes David Gale. ‘He took the longest lunch of any of us. Possibly, LSD taken in massive

repeated doses produces schizophrenia-like symptoms; something is permanently rewired. I don't know whether it could be called brain damage, are brain cells destroyed, or neurochemistry altered such that it can no longer find its correct levels. Clearly, whatever was happening in Syd's brain, we will never know. Whether to do with serotonin levels, or in a more Freudian reading, confronted with contents of his own subconscious he found he couldn't face. Whether you would call it schizophrenia is highly debatable. A sixties casualty, the sun went in and never ever came out. From a sunny, delightful young guy he became a dark, troubled, brooding, potentially violent fuck-up.'

The 1993 *Crazy Diamond* box set further stoked the quest to understand Syd and his music. Watkinson and Anderson's fine biography *Crazy Diamond* was published that same year. *Lost in the Woods*, this author's first book on Syd Barrett, was published in 1998, followed by a flood of books on Syd and his time in Pink Floyd. John Cavanagh's admirable analysis of *The Piper at the Gates of Dawn* was a welcome addition to the canon, as was David Parker's *Random Precision*, the definitive investigation into Barrett's recording sessions.

Other books were anecdotal rehashes, which stoked the Promethean fires of the Syd Barrett mythology, even as they sought to disassemble it. One writer knocked on Barrett's door and then reported the noncommittal exchange as an interview.

In 1996, Barrett fell ill with complications caused by his diabetes. Irregular self-administration of insulin shots led to him being admitted to hospital, as numbness in his hands required treatment. Although Barrett had two fingertips amputated, hysterical tales spread, stating that he had gone blind, or had his hands removed due to gangrene.

The following year, a mono mix of *The Piper at the Gates of Dawn* and bonus disc of singles was followed by a Barrett 'Best of' compiled by EMI, with the unreleased 'Bob Dylan Blues' tacked on. Pink Floyd honoured Barrett with a fifth of the total tracks on *Echoes*, a career-spanning compilation released in 2001. It's surprising how well 'See Emily Play' segued into 'The Happiest Day of Our Lives', or 'Learning to Fly' into 'Arnold Layne'. The compilation clearly demonstrated a continuous creative thread. Barrett's 'Scream Thy Last Scream' and 'Vegetable Man' remain unreleased, written out of the official reading.

Without a comprehensive overview of Barrett's work, unofficial fan-based initiatives picked up the slack left by the beleaguered major labels. The multi-volume *Have You Got It* compilation assembled by Kiloh Smith and the Laughing Madcaps online group handpicked alternate versions, radio sessions and rarities. As a direct result of petitions from Barrett fans, EMI issued a few cherry-picked rarities on 2007's fortieth anniversary re-master of *The Piper at the Gates of Dawn*.

Syd Barrett remained a commodity. He refused to communicate with managers, music publishers or lawyers, and met every offer, connivance, and fraud with a silence that proved devastating. With silence, the call grew in intensity. Syd Barrett fans waited for their Piper in vain. There was always hope he would reconnect with music. There were parallels with Brian Wilson, resuscitated throughout the seventies and eighties to little effect. Advertisements announced the 'return of the genius behind the Beach Boys' while a suicidal Wilson struggled with depression and ill health. Peter Green of Fleetwood Mac and Roky Erickson of the 13th Floor Elevators meandered through intervening decades following meltdowns with spotty work illuminated by flashes of brilliance. Inactivity, mental illness and poor health dogged their steps.

In the mid-nineties, improved diagnosis, medicines, and therapy saw lost acid casualty greats re-emerge one by one from the lysergic gloaming. Their return was little short of miraculous. After years in a netherworld of wandering, imprisonment, and the occasional lacklustre album, Peter Green made a formidable return to performing and recording. Brian Wilson returned for a sell-out series of concerts, and finished his lost *Smile* album. Next, Roky Erickson returned to live performance, his stunning voice and guitar playing intact. Arnaldo Baptista toured and played at the Barbican with Os Mutantes. Ace Kefford of the Move rediscovered his enthusiasm for music and wrote new songs.

Each had spent decades in limbo after nasty experiences with LSD, each recovered. For Barrett, though, what was past was past. A return to the limelight was not on his agenda. Like his American counterpart Skip Spence, money and fame were not motivating factors. Similarly to Barrett, Spence died after years of neglecting his health, as his work received a reappraisal. Roger Barrett pottered away in his garden rather

than be dragged back into the limelight. All too aware of the record industry machine, Barrett chose to remain far from its nefarious workings. To be stalked by photographers and Syd-freaks was an albatross for Roger Barrett, whose connection with the apparition of 'Syd' was tenuous at best. The attention tormented and confused him.

Ian Barrett, one of a handful to visit, said, 'Rog doesn't care one little bit about the past. I'm sure it confuses him anyone else would care so much he sung a few songs and played bit of guitar in the sixties. He simply isn't interested in going back over a time in his life that precipitated his breakdown and retreat from society. He wants to be left in peace to get on with his painting and reading.'

Art proved the best curative, a testament to the healing powers of creativity. Roger seemed content as he delved back into painting. 'He's been interested in geometric patterns and repeated shapes you might see on tiles or weaving,' explained Ian. 'I've seen abstracts in oils, naturalistic watercolours, and woodblock work.'

During 1993-94, Barrett painted many abstracts with repeating motifs. Fond of patterns in textiles, his output was prolific. He produced upwards of thirty watercolours and drawings a month. Roger also executed a tremendous large-scale oil painting, filled with skeletal figures emerging from riotous carnival colours, recalling his interest in painter James Ensor's skeleton clowns.

By 1995, Barrett switched his focus to producing still-life depictions of plants and flowers, along with landscapes and garden scenes. At the age of forty-eight, he reconnected with the lost thread of work at Camberwell. He played jazz CDs by Thelonious Monk, Django Reinhardt, Charlie Parker and Miles Davis on a small stereo system as backdrop to his painting.

Roger always kept a neat stack of supplies on a drawing board. Misguided fans stole brushes from his open windows, even paintings. These thoughtless acts illustrated how parasitic the artist-fan relationship could be. Barrett also spent some time working on a history of art, researched and catalogued with scant commentary. Like his painting, the book was for his own amusement. He worked diligently, with extensive

cross-referencing of art books. His concentration span short, he gathered information from art dictionaries and overviews.

'He is interested in the Byzantine period,' explained Rosemary. 'He has written more than a hundred pages, typed on both sides, going back to drawings in caves and through all periods, up to our days, century after century. Complicated details, one endless list of names and dates taken from other books. There is little of him in it, some comments here and there.'

His long lists of names and dates were fitful and sporadic, though research steadied him, as he worked from the Byzantine era through to the 20th-century De Stijl and Supremacist art movements. A well-thumbed copy of Gardner's *Art through the Ages* served as his primary reference, a seminal text used at Camberwell College of Arts since the 1920s.

Music still had a place in his life. Barrett played for his enjoyment alone. He owned a junior-sized handmade Spanish classical nylon-string guitar, kept upstairs. Purchased at Ken Stevens Music and Instruments Shop on Sussex Street, Barrett strummed the odd tune in his room. 'He plays plain chords but he is happy doing it, and it is beautiful,' Rosemary revealed. 'He also has a harmonica. Yes, he still likes making music. He doesn't write songs. He never plays if someone is there. If I or someone else enters his room while he is playing, he stops. He doesn't want someone telling him, "How nice!" Like returning to the past, they're all memories. He doesn't want compliments, as he got so many they meant nothing at all to him.'

As crowds and enclosed spaces were not to his liking, Roger did not attend cinemas or concerts. He got rid of his television, a wise move for any artist. Sadly, he had no friends. Rosemary told author Luca Ferrari: 'I am sure he has big knots inside and would like to talk about them with someone. He is too reserved, a problem common to us British.'

Barrett shaved his head as religiously as Theravada Buddhist monks did. 'His head is shaven, and his eyebrows. He shaves his body completely, a mania.' His sister felt that Roger's shaved eyebrows and head were strategies to keep people at a distance.

Trichotemnomania is a rare variant of obsessive-compulsive disorder; the more common trichotillomania involves plucking or excessive

grooming until hair is worn away. Recent evidence points to a genetic origin for the malady, which is triggered by substance abuse and powered by stress. One theory maintains that trichotemnomania is allied to fears of being poisoned, powered by deep-seated anxiety. Barrett washed his hands obsessively, dozens of times a day. He wore casual clothes, though was scrupulously clean.

As his life stabilised, Barrett attended to his flourishing garden. *The Tree and Shrub Expert* became his central text. In the front garden lawn ringed with shrubs and borders, Barrett planted and pruned. In the front room, he drew, painted and wrote his art history. In the back room, he relaxed listening to jazz. Plans to use the loft as an art studio were set aside. Barrett painted the shed in the garden a fanciful blend of oxblood and cream, with handmade furniture inside. A curious addition was a device for retrieving his house keys when he had also misplaced the key to the shed. He painted the door green, with the hinges in chalk blue.

To a limited extent, Roger attempted to merge into the local community. One local says, 'He occasionally went and listened to a couple of tunes at Sunday afternoon blues jam sessions at the Boat Race Pub in Cambridge. On one rare occasion he had a conversation with a mate on a pair of shoes he had bought. In Roger's opinion, they were of poor quality and overpriced. Partial to Guinness, the Boat Race served a good pint. A stickler for personal hygiene, he had an eye for female form. He did not like being recognised. If someone were oblique, he would converse on everyday topics, but not his musical career. A shy, but friendly guy, not averse to buying a round of drinks in his local alehouse, but preferring to drink alone or to limit pub interaction to a brief chat.'

In 1997, Ian Barrett said, 'He is starting to find contentment that has eluded him since his breakdown. He is happy to potter about at home, watching television and doing painting or reading. A conversation with Roger is not the same as with most people, as he does have a strange and fragmented way of speaking. Everyday things come out sounding abstract; but have [their] own internal logic and are his way of expressing himself. If people still want to think [of] Roger as this wild lunatic he was supposed to be in the sixties – even though I'm sure much of this was invention – then they are welcome to. I feel this is a disservice to his contribution to music, to him as a human being… I don't think people are

prepared to understand the true extent of Roger's breakdown or the pressures he was put under.'

'I used to see Syd nearly every week in the town or in the supermarket,' recalls Jenny Lesmoir-Gordon. 'Ordinary and middle-aged. I did try to speak to him once at the Gardening Centre. I said, "Syd, it's Jenny!" and he said, "Oh yes – yeah, yeah." I'd find I was standing next to him without even realising it. There was that barrier there and I couldn't speak to him. I felt so loving toward him but he didn't want to be loved. That was the way he wanted to be.'

'Syd clearly was schizophrenic,' asserts Nigel Lesmoir-Gordon. 'My assumption is Syd would have become schizophrenic anyway. You cannot take substances like LSD and turn someone into a schizophrenic. These strong chemicals coupled with fame and fortune speeded it up. Maybe he could have got through his whole life without it.'

Jenny Spires disagrees. 'I could never think of Syd as being a schizophrenic. He definitely had some kind of personality disorder and after his clash with fame seemed to become incredibly depressed.'

'I don't know if he was schizophrenic, or whether too many drugs drilled a hole in his brain,' muses Mike Leonard. 'I did see a film once on television. They'd done it to denigrate him. Sad, they portrayed him as the fifth Beatle, fallen by the wayside, struggling about. This programme dwelled on his mental problems. They visited his house and you saw a strange shadowy figure that'd put on much weight. He looked out through the door and popped back in. Unpleasant. I did see these odd shots of him. Startling to see this rather spritely little gnomish face suddenly in this great big frame, as you get with people in mental trouble. They suddenly look like somebody else. I had a softer spot and more empathy for Syd. His personality I still feel. If he came around the corner, I could imagine how we would be. Sad that Syd acquired a mythical image, partly because one wonders what he would have done had he remained twenty or thirty years in music; what he could have produced.'

'Syd was one of the spearheads, and main inspirational figures of the sixties' so-called psychedelic movement, for good and bad reasons,' asserts Pete Brown. 'Undoubtedly one of two or three people who widened English lyric writing. He made it possible for English people to

write about being English, briefly. Potentially, he could have been a terrific musician as well, cut short by his self-disabling process. I have a strong image of him as a terrific performer. Barrett was incredibly charismatic onstage. He became a hero very fast, moving into uncharted territory, very interesting. Going in there without much equipment, into the jungle without a sunhat. An awful shame to have such a bad aftermath, and to be linked to stupid drugs. Had he remained more together, had he looked after himself, Syd would have turned into a very interesting musician. Apart from that he could write and came up with great lyrics, a fully-fledged British eccentric hero; Syd would have been a *player*.'

'People ask me why Syd withdrew and I think a combination of too much LSD and an eccentric, creative brain,' observed Rosemary. 'If you're tired and put a load of acid into the mix, you have chaos – an explosion. All very nasty but also inevitable. Exhausted and confused about where he was going with Pink Floyd, he took drugs in search of an alternative. He probably did have a nervous breakdown, although never diagnosed. I think he mentally collapsed.'

'Syd was a young god of that era,' declares Jenny Fabian. 'Without dying, something in him went. It seemed to be for all of us. Syd symbolised the look, and the music. The symbol of that time. I don't know what it was about Syd, maybe because we did lose him. Like Jimi Hendrix, who did things with a guitar no one else could do, Syd stands the test of time, even if recordings weren't that good. I'd want to have *The Piper at the Gates of Dawn* in my collection today and two or three Beatles LPs, but a whole mishmash from the sixties I wouldn't want.'

The unfettered experimentation of the London underground scene generated mixed results. With no conception of limits, radical experiments were realised. The downside of Aleister Crowley's infamous edict, 'Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the law,' was the ruination of some of the scene's brightest lights, banished to a black hole of blown minds. (A poster from the era read, 'A mind blown is a mind shown.')

As for LSD, much depends on set, setting and sitter. Underground regular Susan Latham says, 'LSD leaves people in a depressed state, and usually leads to psychiatric intervention. The depressed state arises in waves of sorrow too intense for the un-drugged to ever know or believe.

Psychiatric intervention comes about for other ways of relating and behaving imagined on the drug that disrupt and kill lives. These include a loss of self-will and ability to act on creative impulses or ones ideas. One ends totally passive and outsider observing. The most callous marketing ploy of all time.'

The running battle generated by the authorities' populist 'war on drugs' presents no solution. Prohibition encourages insidious manipulation, whereby flouting the law by taking drugs gives some the illusion they have minds of their own. The drug culture feels as progressive as the latest Labour or Conservative leadership. If anything, drugs produce a false image of eternity, with diminishing returns. When drugs hit the non-discriminating masses, the result is blandness. Drugs like ketamine and GHB, which render users asleep or comatose, seem a poor choice for a night out. Much less, the depressingly ubiquitous heroin and crack that too many consume without thinking.

'I'm interested in today's culture,' says Jenny Fabian. 'The sixties had to happen, and brought about the change. Kids have taken over. They worry they can't get kids to vote or interested in issues, how many kids would vote for the government that would legalise cannabis. You can't say it, can you? I don't think straight people realise how many kids take drugs now, or the quantity.' Peter Wynne-Willson adds, 'We're due for a movement of some kind.'

Duggie Fields laments the passing of the 'vibe' that powered the sixties. 'I don't see it now. I keep thinking, "Well, maybe [it's] something to do with one's age." Occasionally, I do meet people who echo that nowadays, but not often. I know a girl who is a real beauty. So much like girls we used to hang out with then. She has taken an enormous amount of acid. She has that same feel as those girls who took much acid then. There was a general optimism among young people then, there isn't now. Nobody these days would write a song like 'The Times They Are a-Changin'', a big cultural echo for people then.'

Times change, times remain the same. There will forever be innocents dreaming of changing the world. A few in the crowd spring ahead with innovations. An imploding star creates a supernova, which seeds a whole field of new stars.

Twice a year, Roger travelled to London's Tate Gallery, and the National and British Museums. The excitement was going there, though upon his arrival, the noise and crush often proved too much. These were hurried visits, as he often could not wait to go home. Art historian Will Schultes notes that Barrett would gather postcards from the museum giftshop to further scrutinise once home. Among them, an Umbrian *Virgin and Child* (c.1260) and Camille Pissarro's *Fox Hill, Upper Norwood* (1870), works whose colours and lines seeped into his own creations. He joined the Breens on holidays to the seashore. Keen to go to the beach, once there his mood changed to apathy. Arriving was the joy, being there less so.

For relaxation, Barrett watched television, engrossed with the new *Star Trek* series. After a while, he gave up on TV. He completed his book on art. On summer days, Barrett bicycled along paths to nearby Anglesey Abbey, and explored the gardens. The Abbey, one-time home to Lord Fairhaven, was a classic English country house administered by the National Trust. In expansive grounds, its classical sculptures adorned formal and landscape gardens. Barrett wandered paths through wildflower meadows and watched water churning through the 18th-century Lode Watermill. Barrett explored the country house, where lavish rooms each had one ornate clock ticking away. On the hour, they rang through the house in a cavalcade of bells.

By the mid-nineties, Barrett did much of his own shopping, ambulatory and self-sufficient. He enjoyed visits to the art store, where he haggled with the shop clerks over tubes of gouache. Despite his improvement, he had bouts of frustration, and sometimes cried. He said to Rosemary, 'Look, I've done so many things in my life, but with what results?' Rosemary said, 'He is not calm inside, I realise. He needs peace and tries to create it around him.' He kept his life simple out of necessity. Rosemary explained, 'Frills are not only superfluous to Roger, but a problem.'

Despite efforts by Gilmour to ensure that royalty cheques reached him, Barrett threw any letters or parcels addressed to 'Syd Barrett' in the dustbin. Rosemary Breen told Luca Ferrari that he'd wanted to buy bongo drums from Ken Stevens but couldn't afford them. 'Roger has not received royalties for many years. Nobody sends them and so he doesn't get a penny. He isn't angry because it's a way to break with the past. He

still gets many letters and parcels but he throws those addressed to "Syd Barrett" in the dustbin without opening them. They may contain money from royalties but he won't get them.'

Miming songs, mouthing words to his creations like a puppet with strings pulled by invisible hands, might have terrified Syd, who considered his work to be pure. ('They're very pure, you know, the words.') To withdraw was to reaffirm his sense of reality. He declared the primacy of his inner world at expense of the outer. Rosemary told the *Mirror*: 'People would ask him to do paintings but if he did anything it was because he wanted to do it. He could never do a commission – performing onstage is like being commissioned and doing what you're told to creatively. He found that difficult.'

A true artist, Barrett was solely interested in creating; finished product meant little. He shared this with the artisans of Bali, whose art serves social and religious function, made and then destroyed in fire, as part of Balinese Hindu ritual. Neither profit nor posterity has great bearing on the Balinese, who consider museums aberrant. Fire staved off decay; each new artwork a fresh start. Fire also purged, as Barrett externalised anger and frustration in an act that straddled creation and destruction. This has a strong resonance with Metzger's Auto-Destructive Art; Roger's memories of Metzger hacking, burning and ripping through canvas lingered. Barrett also borrowed from Yoko Ono's *Grapefuit*, which he'd read and re-read at Cromwell Road: '*Painting to exist only when it's copied or photographed*. Let people copy or photograph your paintings. Destroy the originals.'

'He did talk about that,' recalled Rosemary. 'Once a creative need was out of his head and onto the paper, he had no further use for it. Once it was down on the paper and out of his head it was done.'

'He had an obsession with the new, so everything had to be replaced all the time,' Rosemary told the *Mirror*. 'I'd say, "You've only had this mattress six months." He'd say, "It's old, it's old," and get rid of it. New hi-fis and stereos were chucked out on a regular basis.'

Roger took photos of his paintings because Rosemary expressed an interest. His muse remained, and ceased to be destructive. Neighbourhood children liked him because his green eyes held a distant twinkle, though he could only convey this to other innocents. 'He was

very good with kids because he was one,' Rosemary observed. 'He immediately got onto their wavelength, he never grew up and was happy just being a child.'

Barrett often photocopied his notes on art and destroyed his originals. Folders on various topics often comprised photocopies of notes. Destroying originals ensured his creations could never be taken from him; never changed or compromised. This was consistent with his other obsessive-compulsive traits, relentless hand-washing and shaving of head and body. Obsessive-compulsion can be a great burden, with extreme self-censure often inhibiting creativity. Barrett's rapid cycles of creating and destroying artwork allowed him to circumvent obsessive perfectionism, which could also cause distress and paralysis. As when he recorded *Piper*, the process had to be spontaneous, made of the moment for the moment.

By the mid-nineties, the bright colours of his youth returned to his paintings. He drew or painted up to ten small works a week, in pencil, ink, watercolour and acrylics. Barrett's reply when Rosemary asked whether he might want to exhibit his paintings was, 'Why, what for?' However, a week later he shyly asked Rosemary, 'Do you think somebody would give me £100 for some of my works?' Rosemary could only reply, 'Yes, I should think so,' knowing people would have given him ten times that amount. Her brother seemed surprised.

Barrett's withdrawal was a matter of simple expediency. Rosemary said, 'He sees everything as a menace. Any contact, excluding me, is a menace.' From childhood, his inner world was so rich he experienced joy even in solitude. Alone in later life, Barrett enjoyed his own company and felt that solitude helped in his quest for knowledge, which never faltered. Cataloguing information, he externalised his inspiration.

Rosemary explained, 'For him, a typical day would consist of getting up early and trundling downstairs for breakfast, always bacon and eggs. Then he'd get on his bike and go to Sainsbury's where he would buy many things he didn't need, especially if they had nice colours or were sparkly. He might even chat with checkout girls. He'd have lunch on his lap and in the afternoon we'd go to B&Q where he'd buy endless plywood, nails and paint.'

Barrett's final years were fruitful within limited bounds. At the turn of the century, he enjoyed an upswing in outlook. Despite bouts of ill health, he continued his DIY projects and tended to his garden, which was cultivated with vigour. The impressive garden formed the heart of his world, and stood as his great solo work. Roger planted a row of Pepperidge bushes, what one keen horticulturalist described as a 'terrible piece of shrubbery filled with thorns, impossible to weed around, in which one ends looking like they fought with a Scottish wild cat'.

Barrett snipped a cutting from the Winter Garden at the Botanic Gardens, a shallow hollow where a curving path runs. He enjoyed walking there all year round. In winter, they opened to the south so that the setting sun flooded in.

He continued the good work of his predecessors, and made the garden at home an extension of the profuse plant life at the Botanic Gardens. Digging in the dirt in every season, he allowed his mind to explore whatever tangents he liked, meditation through action. The garden, like his rough but colourful home-improvement projects, became his expression. Each year he planted a new breed of pink or yellow roses, recorded in a notebook. In 2000, he planted pink Handel roses, in 2003 the Oldtimer variety, in 2004 two different varieties, though in 2005 none. With methodical pruning, he cultivated his roses while neglecting his health.

In November 2004, Roger opened a new notebook and sat in his pale room fronting the garden, writing a commentary on Italian renaissance painters Giotto and Masaccio, his handwriting loose and unsteady. He continued to write disjointed annotations in books, and kept collages of things he found interesting. He made book covers, and annotated dates in each. In one notebook, Barrett wrote, 'Rational argument cannot disprove the existence of a revelation.' For a supposed acid casualty Roger retained a substantial life force, curiosity and desire for knowledge. His folders showed wide-ranging interests and an avid urge to learn.

A touch of nostalgia hit him when he came across an advertisement for vacancies at Camberwell School of Art in 2005, which he duly clipped and pasted into his folder.

Barrett spent hours sitting in a cream-coloured recliner in his kitchen, its headrest worn from constant use, staring at the garden, reading,

drawing, mounting drawings on construction paper. In his art box, he kept sharpened pencils and glitter ink pens. Inside was a small metallic case that read *Helix Oxford Mathematical Instruments, Complete and Accurate*, dating from the fifties, a vestige of his childhood. A red A4 file dated April 2001 contained voluminous notes on the weather, British Cathedrals, and radio transmission. Fascinated by the two-hundred-carat Millennium Star diamond, flawless and pear-shaped, he pasted photos of it from newspapers into his scrapbook.

Roger's ordered annotations showed his continued interest in electronics and circuitry. He made intricate drawings of electronic circuits, and mapped the topography of the British Isles in coloured pens. The technical side of his brain seemed fine-tuned and intact. Barrett retained considerable skill with circuitry, building his own small radio set, with studious annotations and schematics.

In his sitting room were large maps, one of the world and another of Britain. After 1967, he never travelled further than the coast, for holidays with his sister and brother-in-law. A collection of maps and travel books included a *Lonely Planet* guide to Great Britain, an *A* to *Z* map book of Cambridge and a *Philip's Family World Atlas*. Barrett kept a book on North Wales and Mount Snowdon, memories of when he first got 'lost' in the woods. He was the classic armchair traveller. His sister said he enjoyed map books, and bought countless atlases.

At his table, with a lamp next to a sealed fireplace, stood a collection of knick-knacks. With taste for bright soothing pastel colours, he painted his chair pink – a piquant nod to his days in 'that old band'. He painted two red stripes, top and bottom, on his handmade speaker cabinets, crude and almost medieval in aspect, like a confessor's grille. A touch of pop art also, in alternating silver and red stripes he painted on a chest of drawers. Some furnishings appeared rebuilt or reassembled after being broken, though this is uncertain. He built a bread bin from plywood, nailed and glued together. Inside were clothes pegs.

In the bathroom, handmade curtains were cut from cloth patterned with dancing zebras, lions and elephants. Another whimsical touch was a door handle fitted with a plastic hippopotamus, which recalled his legendary humour. He kept a psychedelic pillow with waving brown and red lines, a relic of one of his London flats. Roger had also taken to

painting his front door blue or purple, like at Earlham Street all those years ago. A homemade pine coffee table was raised on casters with buckled edges. Below the tabletop was a small slot for housing his paintbrushes. Barrett built a light box with a strong outdoor bulb, perched atop his dresser in one of his bedrooms, a homemade remedy for grey wintry days.

As in his youth, when he built his own amplifier, Barrett built speakers, with car stereo speakers built into crude handmade cabinets. One speaker was painted pink, the other green. A second set had red stripes top and bottom, with a light switch built into the back. Roger's seemed to be a low-impact life, dozing in his armchair or on a bench in the garden, weather permitting. 'He would get frustrated,' Rosemary told *Mojo*. 'He would get tired and that would make him cross. I think he was content. I hope he was. I'm not sure I could say "happy". Happiness is such a strange thing.'

In Roger's sitting-room library, art reference books included *The Oxford Companion to Twentieth Century Art, The Oxford Companion to Decorative Arts, Gemstones, Triumph of American Painting, Impressionism* and *English Art and Modernism*. Barrett signed or initialled books 'RKB' or 'RB', and dated and covered them in much the same way a student might. Dates ranged from 1987 to 2006, marking almost twenty years of developing interests.

His diverse collection also included tomes on *Archaeology, Minerals, Rocks and Fossils*, and *Carpets of Central Persia*. He colour coded spines in red, pink or blue to differentiate periods in art. He wrapped a few books in covers with abstract patterns. The colourful cover for his *Compact Oxford English Dictionary of Current English* suggested words still exercised a special fascination.

'He never enjoyed films,' explained Rosemary. 'He wanted fantasy, like *Alice in Wonderland,* children's fantasy. Make believe and fairies fascinated him and always had done.'

Barrett delved into painter Willem de Kooning's work, the one painter he owned a book on. His interest in de Kooning was appropriate considering his style in later years. Like de Kooning, who struggled with Alzheimer's, Roger possessed a steadfast refusal to give in to illness or

decline, and an equally strong urge to create and remain active. Barrett never gave in nor gave up.

There were odd touches, such as a white label covering his name on the title page of a 1995 *Oxford Textbook of Psychiatry*. Opening the book, chapters on manic-depression and paranoia fell open along a crease in the spine, the pages well thumbed. Barrett had added handwritten annotations. In a synopsis of Freud and Jung, Barrett noted key points in his own hand. 'Hysteria could be traceable to loss in memory in early life, representing emotional energy, possibly sexual in nature, but also devised the method called free association, to free the unconscious, i.e. the Oedipus complex.' He pencilled in an adjunct point: 'states loss of an object'. At the bottom of the page, Barrett added a hopeful annotation: 'all manic depressives therefore recover'.

Roger was aware all was not well in his mind, though the label over his name suggested some distinct ambivalence about psychiatry. His medications were prescribed at Addenbrooke's and filled at the local chemist, though whether these were for diabetes maintenance or psychiatric maladies is unknown.

Barrett went to Waterstone's bookstore on Sidney Street and perused books in what once was the Dorothy Ballroom. He had played in this room with Pink Floyd in 1967 – a lifetime ago. He had danced to bands here with girlfriends. Barrett combed bookshops on St Edward's Passage between Guildhall and King's College, near Market Square. He cycled home on his bicycle, painted blue. Neighbour David Sore observed, 'Syd was the slowest cyclist ever, unable to coordinate peddling well.'

He kept a tidy toolbox lined with foam panels to hold his hammer, box cutter, planer and wrench, and a sandstone to sharpen his trowel. A hacksaw, mallet, plane, chisel, hammer, screwdrivers and a spirit level showed that Barrett liked to build rather than destroy. He built a monastic wooden single-bed frame, like those Wynne-Willson made in their Earlham Road flat. Barrett's home was characterised by its Spartan furnishings, though with idiosyncratic colour schemes. Photographs of the bare interiors of his house taken after his death do not reflect the rather cosy dwelling he filled with supplies and knickknacks. A Caucasian kilim rug with geometric designs enlivened his sitting room.

Throughout the house, dashes of colour recalled a much sunnier disposition. The spark remained, though muted.

Not all contact with the outside world was cut off. Barrett made a pink letter holder for correspondence and sent homemade Christmas cards signed 'Roger' to neighbours and family. 'One year, when I saw in the newspaper it was his birthday, I stuck a card through his letter box,' recalled Sore. 'The next time I saw him he said, "Hello," and held my gaze for a couple of seconds. He seemed to be thanking me. I'd long since ceased to fear him. I knew he was a deeply troubled soul, deserving of sympathy more than anything else.'

The occasional visitor found him coherent, sane and – if in a good mood – amenable to pleasantries and banal discussion, though he did seem medicated. Any Syd freaks who sought him out came away disappointed. They were looking for a mirage from another time and space. Many tried to get in touch, some more innocuous than others. One young woman knocked on his door and smoked a joint with Barrett; another rang him long-distance and told him how much his music meant to them. There was a silent pause on the other end. 'Thanks, thanks very much,' he said before ringing off. Two fans ran into Barrett by accident while touring Pink Floyd's Cambridge and found him agreeable if uninterested. He consented to being photographed, posed sidelong with his back almost to the camera, as though to say, 'It's not me you're looking for.'

Video footage of Barrett strolling through town was packaged and sold. He talked to the cameraman, in clear tones though without much interest, and shrugged his shoulders when the man asked if he could film him. Barrett was filmed peeking into a store window where a poster decrying evils of LSD was hanging. He looked at the poster and turned to stare into the camera: 'There's really nothing to say,' his unspoken assessment. He was filmed loping along Perne Road, back from Sainsbury's on a hot summer day with newspapers underarm, clad in his standard white singlet and baggy shorts. He appeared utterly in his own world, as in childhood days, engaged in an elaborate internal dialogue as he walked, hands in pockets. There also seemed a touch of yearning loneliness, a wish to engage with the world but an uncertainty about how

to do so. Not that he appeared to be tortured by this; Roger seemed content enough inside his own musings.

In autumn, Barrett was seen scowling, wearing a woolly hat and large headphones, wandering and dreaming down footpaths to the water's edge. This was the private side that his teenage friends noted would lead him to duck out of parties and go wandering. The trait reasserted itself in later life. Grave and serious, his solemnity paradoxically turned into an almost cheerful appearance as he grew older. If the world weighed heavy outside his window, what remained of his sense of purpose was unaffected by people's expectations. Barrett lived for himself.

When John Edginton's documentary on his life was broadcast in 2001, Barrett watched it at Rosemary's house. Pleased to hear 'See Emily Play', Roger commented that the rest was 'a bit noisy'.

The online Floyd group Echoes stumped up funds for a memorial bench for Barrett at the fountain in the Botanical Garden. An inscribed plate read 'To RKB – the Piper' and 'it's awfully considerate of you to think of me here'. In 2002, an enterprising Echoes member knocked on Barrett's door to present him with directions to the bench. Barrett opened the door, a look of unnerving intensity on his face. The man explained why he was there and Barrett asked where it was. The man handed over a map with directions to the bench. As he glanced over the page Barrett's rather severe expression melted into a smile the outside world had not seen in decades. Barrett asked for the other map. He signed it 'R Barrett'.

The media still buzzed around his rubbish like malefic flies, and hunted him for photo opportunities. The press took from him until the day he died. Tabloid photos showed a man scared of the world, who could not understand why he was treated like an oddity. To his credit, Roger did not become angry or abusive.

The press's great hope was to goad Barrett into acting like a madman. Besieged by the media, he displayed dignified self-composure in face of grievous antagonism. In 2000, another paparazzo jumped in front of Barrett as he walked home from an errand. He still had no hair, nor eyebrows; thin and dressed in neat casual blue shirt and pressed shorts. He spoke this time. Barrett's first (and last) words to the press in more than a quarter of a century were, 'You'd better leave it alone, I don't do that anymore.'

‘More than a product of his time, Syd was unique,’ observed Wright. ‘Someone who is unique will write what they want, and won’t write what they feel they should write. He had a very individualistic way of living – of looking at life.’

‘He wanted everything to be original,’ Rosemary told *Mojo*. ‘He never understood the idea of age. Everything had to be for now. This was the only moment that mattered. He had no want or need for material things. He’d buy something like a camera and throw it away within days. He didn’t like clutter. There was enough clutter in his mind. He couldn’t be bothered with being ill and he couldn’t be bothered to look after himself. There were more interesting things to think about. He was very mad, but able to do anything and everything he wanted to.’

Perhaps most surprising was Mick Rock’s gamble on a gambit that had no real hope of payoff. In 2001, Rock assembled photos of Barrett into the book *Psychedelic Renegades* and thought he’d see whether Barrett would sign a few hundred copies. Sending word through Syd’s family members, who administered his business dealings, Rock was astonished when Barrett agreed. Barrett signed paper inserts ‘Barrett’. Though he showed no interest in the book, autographed editions sold for £400. Three hundred signatures seemed a gesture of thanks to a friend, who maintained a rapport when most had written him off, an exception in a scene of false appearances. His sister stated he did not want to see the book, so he just signed the inserts.

At the July 2005 London G8 Summit concert, organised by Sir Bob Geldof, four members of Pink Floyd played together for first time in twenty-four years. Roger Waters prefaced ‘Wish You Were Here’ with a dedication. ‘This is for those who aren’t here, particularly Syd.’ When Rosemary told her brother his old group was scheduled to play, Barrett showed no interest. He had long since discarded his television set.

Today, the town Barrett, Waters and Gilmour were raised in is a busy city of one hundred and thirty thousand with a substantial floating population of students, three million annual tourists, and the third largest population of homeless people in Britain. The M11 motorway leads into town, where cars clog roads. Marks & Spencer stands in place of the demolished Victoria Ballroom, only its listed frontage remaining. The Rex was demolished for housing. El Patio, the Kenya Coffee House, the

Turk's Head, and the Criterion are all gone. The Corn Exchange remains a prime venue. The Anchor and Mill Pond remain the same.

Eyesore shopping lanes like Lion Yard and the greed of city councils and estate agents have eroded this once pristine place. Cambridge today is a computer and technology centre, hence the appellation 'Silicon Fens'. With the influx of technology, yuppies bought choice bits of property as housing costs soared. The lack of affordable housing became such a problem that there was talk of building an estate adjoining Grantchester Meadows.

There are plans afoot to ruin the area surrounding Silver Street Bridge. Proposals by Cambridge University could see the demolition of much of the Mill Lane area, all for another complex of shops, flats, offices, and restaurants. This, despite the fact that the hideous Lion's Yard shopping centre perpetually runs below occupancy, with shuttered shops. The university and city wish to create two shopping districts, one of them along Silver Street.

The Anchor Pub, the Mill and Miller's Yard have 'potential for reuse', according to officials. In short, the area surrounding Roger's sacred touchstone, the Mill Pond, will be destroyed. The Mill was the pub where he'd played acoustic sessions with David Gilmour, the Anchor where he sat by docks watching punters, Mill Lane where he and friends promenaded and met on weekends – all will be demolished or rendered unrecognisable. At his beloved Byron's Pool, no longer can one swim in the water, the view blighted by an ugly concrete weir and spewing pipes.

In January 2006, Roger made preliminary sketches for a painting of Gog Magog Hills, showing clarity in execution and planning, it was rendered in pen and ink with familiar crosshatch lines. Life-affirming to the end, Barrett's painted dispersing clouds as dusk approaches are symbolic of acceptance of his place in nature's cycle. In his room, he kept a beautiful and simple watercolour of a pie chart depicting the movements of the solstice. In his last years, Barrett was well in tune with the cyclical nature of time and circumstance.

Barrett's still life of flowers was reminiscent of Vincent Van Gogh's *Flowers in a Blue Vase*, and like Van Gogh, he painted right to the end. He arranged lemons and green bottles on a shelf next to his easel and

painted a still life. Sitting under his blue lamp at his plywood-topped table with green legs, he worked on sketches and drawings for more paintings. Roger kept his plain easel in the bay window of his sitting room; ready to paint whenever light was good. His blue-and-red box held his painting supplies – standard inexpensive brushes with entry-level acrylic paint and the odd tube of gouache to augment his watercolours. Varnish, turpentine and thinners showed that Barrett had retained his technique. His colour palette echoed with a bygone whimsy – fuchsia, tangerine, buttercup yellow and burgundy.

Ring binders of notes subdivided into sections on weather, British cities, English cathedrals, hieroglyphics and the alphabet, England and France (with pasted photos of French beaches echoing his trip to the South of France with Gilmour) and radio amplification were symbolic of his boundless curiosity. A photo of Victoria Beckham in the sunshine had a pasted addendum below it warning of the dangers of excess sun exposure. Roger's environmental concerns were addressed with a newspaper clipping reading 'Pollution kills hundreds of salmon and trout'.

Elsewhere, he kept cursory notes on topics as varied as Anglo-Saxons, Middle Eastern history and the 'Philosophy of Priests'. Like a schoolboy, Barrett kept a scrapbook stuffed with information on music festivals, interior design, even African trade and diamonds. Clippings of motorcycles and women's fashions were testament, if nothing else, to his diverse tastes. A second scrapbook remained mostly empty, as he never got the chance to complete it. Inside were clippings on Chinese painter Ding Yi's acyclic works on tartan. Barrett was up to date on trends in contemporary arts and read the arts section in papers every Sunday. He also clipped an article on recent Turner Prize winners.

Like Roky Erickson during his lost period, Barrett kept bits of paper with statistics on medal winners at the Winter Olympics, Cambridge United's football results, or Tour de France classifications. Never much interested in sports, these scraps hint at a search for regularity amid chaos, statistical order in a sea of disorder. Like his art annotations, in a life that spun into disarray in his twenties, routine allayed chaos. Gardening, painting, DIY and shopping formed the bulk of Roger's life.

Barrett's DIY home improvements were often haphazard. He modified an end table he found too short by gluing on bits of wood to make casters. His handmade or modified bookshelves and cabinets were off kilter, unlevelled, and lashed together with random screws and bolts. Whether reflecting a disordered mind rather than carelessness, the intent was clear, though the execution erratic.

Barrett was an avid collector of fantasy books. In 2003, along with half the Western world, he bought *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*. A fan of Conn Iggulden's *Emperor* series, he worked his way through *The Gods of War* during 2005. Barrett sat in his armchair following Julius Caesar and his legions, fresh from conquests in Gaul and Britain, crossing the Rubicon and racing to Rome to confront enemies, and his own assassination on the Ides of March.

Roger also kept a book on card games, though one imagines he played solitaire. Of books that captivated him in his youth, he retained *Ivanhoe* and Homer's *Odyssey. The Wind in the Willows* was nowhere to be seen, nor books on poetry or fairytales, much less the *I Ching* or books on mysticism, spirituality or metaphysics.

Rosemary recalled, 'He bought children's fantasy books but when I asked him about them he'd never read them, he just wanted to have them.'

Barrett lived out his final years in Cambridge. Walking town streets or riding his bike, by his late fifties he was bald on top, sometimes stocky, at other times thin. With paint flecks on his jeans, and hands in his coat, Roger was indistinguishable among the crowds that shopped in the town centre. A hip cat to the end, Barrett was the only sixty-year-old in East Anglia with black Converse trainers. What stood out were his eyes, which retained a glimmer of preternatural luminescence, and showed considerable psychic damage.

Walking alone on his last birthday in January 2006, tabloid photos showed a thoughtful man with aggrieved nobility. He displayed no signs of being a man who thought he was to die soon. He purchased a new mountain bike in February, painted the frame red, and outfitted the bicycle with baskets and bells to make it look good. He also bought a *Concise Oxford Dictionary of Arts and Artists*, dated in his handwriting

on flyleaf with the full date ‘Thursday 2 March 06’, as though the passage of time had taken on concrete dimensions.

‘The last time I saw Syd he was cycling along Perne Road coming from Sainsbury’s,’ recalls Jenny Spires. ‘A beautiful sunny day in May. He was slim, wearing cream chinos and his white open neck shirt was billowing out behind him. I was driving, and as I overtook him, I could see he was smiling, really, really smiling.’

On 29 May David Bowie joined David Gilmour to sing ‘Arnold Layne’ at the Royal Albert Hall, with Rick Wright taking an extended solo; a fine and fitting tribute from Syd’s old bandmate, who was showing the first signs of the cancer which claimed him in 2008.

In May, Barrett was admitted to Addenbrooke’s Hospital, suffering from what seemed to be complications derived from his ulcers or diabetes. On forms asking his occupation, he wrote ‘artist’. ‘He was always an artist to himself,’ Rosemary said. A diagnosis of pancreatic cancer, a deadly and treatment-resistant form, did not bode well for Barrett’s survival. He spent three weeks under sedation before asking to be taken home, accompanied by carers. His sister, loyal to the end, was by his bedside. Three days after his return from hospital, Barrett drifted into sedated sleep. Roger Keith Barrett died at home, aged sixty, on 7 July 2006.

Though the cause of death was pancreatic cancer, smoking, obesity and diabetes were all factors. His brother Alan said, ‘He died peacefully at home. There will be a private family funeral in the next few days. Now we just wish to be left alone.’

‘When he died, he had been gone for so many years. When I heard he was ill, I tried and failed to contact his sister to ask if I could help, but there was nothing that could be done,’ said Roger Waters. Pink Floyd issued a collective statement. ‘The group are naturally very upset and sad to learn of Syd Barrett’s death. Syd was the guiding light of the early band line-up and leaves a legacy which continues to inspire.’

Waters commented, ‘Very sad. Syd was a lovely guy and a unique talent. He leaves behind a body of work that is touching and deep, and will shine on forever.’ He later admitted, ‘Just after Syd had died it was

slightly unnerving [performing "Shine on You Crazy Diamond"] for a couple of performances, I have to say.'

Others lined up to pay the Piper tribute; Robyn Hitchcock said, 'There would have been no Robyn Hitchcock as we know him if it weren't for Syd Barrett. I'm proud to have been his number one fan.' David Bowie's statement was succinct, 'A diamond indeed.'

Days after Barrett died, the Red Hot Chili Peppers played in Manchester. Guitarist John Frusciante, who had battled back from his own personal dark globe of drugs and despair, simply said, 'Syd Barrett pointed many of us to the light,' before launching into 'Golden Hair'.

Ian Barrett joined sixteen family members for Barrett's memorial service. 'We met up at the crematorium, simple and quiet as you can imagine. There were only sixteen of us. My sister-in-law played music on chapel organ, nice, some nice classical pieces. I was hoping we'd get one of Roger's songs but I think it could have been a bit too raw for some of the family. There was a humanist officiate who led a few simple tributes with a cousin reading a tribute written by Rosemary. My eldest uncle read from a book that was a favourite of Roger's; *The Little Grey Men* by B.B.

'After more music and contemplation, Roger was laid to rest. We made our way back out into burning sun. Only a small chapel, we barely half filled it. I think this is how it should be; peaceful and intimate.

'One thing that struck me on meeting up with Rogers's closest family *en masse* – was how much sense it made he decided to withdraw from madness of the music business. As a family we aren't the most gregarious creatures on Earth. Yes, he had mental frailties and problems, but it is simply not true to say he was either "mad", a recluse, or incapable of functioning as a human being.'

Syd's niece Melly Barrett played her uncle's classical favourites on organ – Joseph Haydn's *Andante* from Sonata No. 40 in E major. The end of the service was marked by baroque composer George Frideric Handel's *Courante* from Suite No. IV in E minor, and Barrett's favourite, Johann Sebastian Bach's *Allemande* from Partita No. IV in D major.

Friends and fans left bouquets, photos and letters at his gate. One was from Jock and Sue, another from residents of St Margaret's Square, who left an ambiguous, 'To Syd – we will always remember you.'

Those who had shared the flash and excitement of the sixties with Syd expressed their sense of loss. Chris Beard of the Purple Gang says, 'I'll see Syd at the Eternal Technicolor Dream, on the helter-skelter.' 'We remember Syd with great affection,' Nigel Waymouth of Hapshash observes. 'A fine artist and a gentle soul who did so much to change the face of music.'

'Syd was charismatic, his laughter infectious,' Jenny Spires recalls. 'A wellspring of information and uniquely interesting, greatly admired by those who knew and loved him. Warm, considerate and courteous, the sort of guy who held open doors for you. We had youth and beauty and I will always remember him from those days.'

In the end, Barrett's search transcended the vagaries of drugs or psychedelia. His revolutionary chromatic improvisations scratched the surface of a potentially new school of music. The world awaits the first just-intonation rock band.

Syd, unleashing a storm of echo-laden guitar thunderbolts onstage at UFO, explored unknown territory. Much like William Burroughs writing *Naked Lunch* in Tangiers or John Coltrane stacking chords at two hundred and fifty beats per minute. Barrett crossed the border, then journeymen built upon the ground he broke. His themes, overt or implied, were of imagination, mystery, transcendence, space, travel, whimsy, and the nebulous other world he found.

'Syd Barrett' as an icon retains relevance because he represents ideas perishable in today's climate – feeling, empathy, naïvety, intuition, experimentation, joy, adventure, belief and, most of all, hope. An innocent and a pure artist, Barrett saw through success as he ascended. The pity was that he destroyed himself in preserving his art. There is another attraction to the mythic Syd Barrett archetype; retreat and exile from a world that asked too much, that wanted all he had to give. Now that he is dead, celebrating his art will be a less ambivalent process.

EPILOGUE

Barrett's death provoked a flood of eulogies, post-mortems and heavy-handed tributes splashed across the media. After decades as a cult figure, Syd's face was plastered across half the Sunday colour supplements in UK papers. Extended tributes on the BBC and Channel 4 news were accompanied by long features in the *Guardian*; cover features in *Mojo, Uncut* and the *NME*. As word of his death spread across Reuter's newswire, memorials flashed across the informal media network of forums, blog posts, and bulletin boards like wildfire. One can only think that Barrett would have laughed himself silly.

Opinion, as ever, was divided. Barrett was presented as the sacrificial lamb of the love generation; an eccentric, a recluse, an acid casualty, a madcap, a genius. All the familiar tags were trotted out. A few publications delved beneath the surface and talked about his music and pervasive influence. What did come through crystal clear was a protracted nostalgic lament for this figure who symbolised the vanquished promise of an era.

Journalists wrote about Tom Stoppard's play *Rock 'n' Roll* as though it was the second coming, rather than a wooden set piece interspersed with the gratuitous inclusion of Syd's 'Golden Hair'. In Stoppard's play, Syd appeared in an opening scene sat on a wall in Cambridge in 1968, singing 'Golden Hair' and playing a pipe to a flower-child girl below. Random appearances by mighty Czech dissident group the Plastic People of the Universe followed amid a mishmash of idealism, Velvet Revolution, Prague Spring. Syd, as Pan, skated awkwardly over the top as a unifying symbol.

Stoppard made laborious attempts in the pages of *Vanity Fair* to explain his motivations for using Syd. 'Secretly about time, disinterested ongoingness [*sic*] of everything, unconditional mutability that makes every life poignant.'

Stoppard opined, ‘Dissidence is saying “no”.’ However, dissidence entails more than simple negation. A dissident challenges established doctrines, orthodoxies, or institutions. In this sense, Syd Barrett was a dissident, a tonal revolutionary, a last Romantic in a dehumanised world; rather than the self-congratulating, self-pitying characters that troop across the boards in Stoppard’s play. Self-pity and self-congratulation were two things Barrett never had time for. Stoppard’s play reclaimed Barrett for the wishy-washy middle classes, safe for chatter, cut to cliché.

On 27 July, David Gilmour played a stark, poignant ‘Dark Globe’ live at Clam Castle, Austria. Gilmour told the audience, ‘I’m going to do a song, if I’m brave enough, called “Dark Globe” from Syd Barrett’s first solo album *The Madcap Laughs*, which I worked on. Tonight is my first performance since Syd died, a little tribute. A song I’ve never sung in my life or rehearsed in my life and I don’t intend to. I thought I’d do my first rehearsal tonight!’ Gilmour, at Abbey Road on 29 August, also played a storming ‘Astronomy Dominé’. As if channelling Syd, he at last synthesised their respective styles in a dazzling display, Rick Wright next to him in full flow.

On 10 May 2007, Joe Boyd organised the ‘Madcap’s Last Laugh’ tribute at the Barbican in London. Peter Wynne-Willson sat in the rear of the hall, orchestrating a shower of liquid lights that bathed the stage below. Kevin Ayers, the Bees, Vashti Bunyan, Mike Heron, Robyn Hitchcock, Chrissie Hynde, Captain Sensible, Sense of Sound choir and others joined to celebrate Barrett’s music. Storm Thorgerson, John ‘Hoppy’ Hopkins, Peter Jenner and Ray Davies sat in the audience.

Roger Waters came onstage and said, ‘Of course, I’m terrified. These small occasions are much more frightening than the big ones where you can hide behind all the paraphernalia – all the lights, and the flashes and bangs, and all that preparation. But for those of us who suffer from a sense of shame, and doom, as I’m sure any of you who know my work will know I have all my life [suffered with], this is all quite stressful. However, it would not have been stressful for Syd, because he did not suffer from those things in the same way that I do. Before the illness, he lived his life like he walked: he kind of… bounced, the whole time, and a lot of that rubbed off on the rest of it, and I think that his lack of a sense of shame enabled him to take all the risks that he did, musically, and

that's why we owe him such an enormous debt. Certainly, I do personally, because without Syd, I don't know what I'd be doing – probably would have been a property developer or something!' Waters played his own song, 'Flickering Flame'.

David, Nick and Rick – Pink Floyd – came onstage late to play 'Arnold Layne'. Gilmour said, 'Syd really was everything they say he was, our Syd.' On hearing calls for 'Roger Waters!' Gilmour replied, 'Yes, he was here too… now the rest of us!' It was the final Pink Floyd performance.

Robyn Hitchcock and Heavy Friends organised their own tribute concert on 26 May, where they reprised the entirety of Pink Floyd's Games for May performance, before launching into a half dozen of Barrett's solo songs. Particularly impressive was Hitchcock's rendition of 'If It's In You', which reclaimed the song from its character assassination on *The Madcap Laughs*, to expose it as a melodious gem rife with Dylan-inspired touches.

In September, Barrett's home went under the auctioneer's hammer. Nearly a hundred potential buyers, the curious among them, filed through. The colour scheme of his rooms were in soothing neutral pastels, one room in orange, one blue, several a combination of orange, blue and pink. A toy hippo was nailed to a door handle. Some found this little detail 'inscrutable' and 'mad', others 'charming' and 'poignant'. Like reactions to and interpretations of his music, much depended on one's perspective. In life as in death, Barrett continued to present an enigma. Was his home a shell or refuge, hive or hideaway?

Barrett left an estate valued at £1.7 million. For a millionaire, he'd lived a frugal life, with much of his supposed wealth coming after *Echoes* was released. His brother Alan received £425,000, while siblings Rosemary Breen, Ruth Brown and Donald Barrett each received £275,000. Rosemary also received the proceeds from the sale of the house, £310,000, and all of the late singer's possessions, auctioned for £119,000.

In November, Barrett's belongings were auctioned. Cheffins Auction House raised £121,000, which will help fund a bursary for local arts

students. The auctioneer blinked at lot 722. ‘A first for me – an IKEA bookcase. It does not get any more unusual than this.’

Bids came in from around the world. A frenzy ensued, with fans paying £800 for his artificial Christmas tree. His collection of reference books fetched £4,000. Even his psychedelic pillow went for £1,600. All told, his nine paintings sold for £47,000. One painting, which the Cheffins catalogue grandly titled *Still Life with Maroon Bowl and Vases* (and the *Times* referred to as ‘an abstract of a hot dog with dripping sauce’) fetched £6,000. The solstice pie chart sold for £5,000. Barrett’s abstract of Gog Magog Hills, £6,000. An *Earth and Sky* watercolour netted £4,200. A *Summer Landscape* oil painting went for £6,500, while a sublime *Still Life of Dried Flowers*, painted at Camberwell, earned £8,500.

The prices paid for Roger Barrett’s belongings varied wildly, some enterprising soul paid £1,400 for the homemade bin he’d used to store clothes line pins, while the painter’s easel he spent years in front of, spattered with paint from the creator’s brush, took in a meagre £550. A painted stool went for an absurd £4,400. His old blue bicycle went for £5,000 and his new red mountain bike for £500 more. Barrett’s auctioned goods were inevitably re-routed through online auctions. His little acoustic guitar resold for £20,000, curtains from his bathroom brought somebody £1,500.

While the speakers from Syd’s stereo at Wetherby Mansions went for an astonishing £3,000, some deluded soul bought a signed work order for electrical repairs for £850. Floods of fake autographs garnered absurd sums. All this from a man whose main indulgence was buying small items at Sainsbury’s which had bright colours or sparkled.

Some complained that the auction was an exploitation of a man who placed a premium on privacy, though these doubts were assuaged when money raised from the auction went toward establishing a foundation to fund art training in Cambridge, much needed and lacking in this oasis of education. ‘Roger’s first love was art and he always considered himself more an artist than a musician. We hope to use the money to set up some kind of bursary in the town for budding art students,’ said Rosemary.

The City Wakes is a multimedia arts project, produced by Escape Artists, with community groups around Cambridge, as a tribute to the

legendary Syd Barrett: painter, musician and founder member of Pink Floyd. Income generated through the City Wakes will go toward supporting work of Escape Artists, a charity that provides arts-based education and support services to people with mental health problems, both in institutional settings and in the wider community.

The first public performance of the City Wakes project took place at the Centre at St Paul's on 5 December 2007. A short presentation of included versions of 'Bike', 'See Emily Play', 'Arnold Layne' and 'Dominoes'. The Syd Barrett Trust helped fund the event, where Rosemary and Paul Breen were on hand. Rosemary said, 'I wanted to set up a trust because so many people held his memory with such affection, I felt they would, and I would, value the opportunity to put that affection to good use. There seemed to be such love for him free in the air, I thought, let's do something useful with it.

'My main motivation is I'm very aware of how lonely Syd was because he was different, especially in later years in Cambridge after the Floyd. I would like to think people can get companionship and be accepted into society, even if only in a group of like-minded people. Loneliness he felt was dreadful. If we could stop that, or at least help some people from feeling loneliness because they're different, then I would feel we've achieved something.

'Because I recognise how important music and painting were to Syd, I want to help other people, who can benefit in the same way from the arts as he did, by providing opportunities for active involvement in the creative process.'

Rosemary told the *Cambridge News*: 'For him music always went alongside art and if anything he was probably moved off a more obvious path by music. He always considered himself an artist, not a musician. Music came to the fore because of Pink Floyd. Without that he would have carried on the art and would have had a much more fulfilling life.' In 2008, the City Wakes launched with a week-long celebration of Syd Barrett. Attendee Stephen Bassett wrote: 'On a rain-sodden night in Cambridge as we walked through the archway into the grounds of Trinity College, light shone like beacons from the chapel to our right. Through the windows of the buildings surrounding the quadrangle we could see

and feel the history that has passed through this seat of learning over the centuries.

‘Another chapter was about to be written, as Syd Barrett’s music was soon to be performed. This is probably the most beautiful setting that could have been chosen for the Gala performance – the acoustics were perfect, the audience sat and listened and the applause shook the rafters.’

The band entered through the central walkway, as Peter Wynne-Willson’s psychedelic lightshow rippled across the chapel walls. Composer Simon Gunton’s arrangements gave startling new life to Syd’s songs. Lending a modern slant to a classic, a rap singer performed ‘Arnold Layne’. Members of the Chapel Choir sang a stunning and poignant rendition of ‘Dark Globe’, and the Grasshopper’s Green Herbarian Band ran through ‘See Emily Play’ and ‘Dominoes’. Before the final encore of ‘Astronomy Dominé’, Rosemary movingly spoke to the crowd, giving her heartfelt thanks to the performers and saying how pleased she knew Syd would have been with the arrangements of his songs.

‘Upon leaving the chapel as we looked back,’ Bassett wrote, ‘we could see the lighting effects still visible through the stained glass windows bringing a glow to the very dark, wet night outside. Syd’s presence seemed to move around the room.’

Barrett’s earthly legacy is his provision of a chance for young artists to flourish. His other legacy lies in his songs, his revolutionary chromatic improvisations, his contribution to English poetics, and a cautionary tale, perhaps, reminding us to ‘take life easy, I mean so easy’. Far from a poster child for defeat, Syd Barrett remains a shining icon of hope.

From bluegrass renditions of his songs by the Gnomes of Lawrence Kansas, to chamber music arrangements by Marco Lenzi with Anthony Reynolds, the avant-garde metal of Yakuza and Pentagram, orchestral reconfigurations by Daniel Nass, the freak folk of Directing Hand, noise rock by Fujii Masahide Electric, Keller’s ten-piece band, or I.Overdrive Trio’s superb jazz – *Syd lives*. It is the celebration of a mind that literally apprehended the world through a uniquely different view.

His legendary laughter reverberates underground. His art, music and words let you throw caution beyond bough winds.

The Syd Barrett Fund
c/o Escape Artists
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When in Cambridge…
Take an early morning walk down in the beech woods
Cross the ley line at Wort's Causeway
Take a nap in the afternoon in Grantchester Meadows
Lay back and stare at trees in Wandlebury Woods
Climb the Gogs
Lope down Silver Street on the balls of your feet. You're bound to hear the Piper's tune.

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Syd Barrett Fund
Escape Artists
City Wakes

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Foreword
Genesis Breyer P-Orridge

To those who understand there is more to work than work
Vladimir Davidiuk, Kenneth J. Walker, Rick Delgado.

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Recommended Books

Richie Unterberger, *Unknown Legends of Rock'n'Roll* / David Parker, *Random Precision: Recording the Music of Syd Barrett 1965-1974* / John Cavanagh, *The Piper at the Gates of Dawn* / Glenn Povey, *Echoes: The Complete History of Pink Floyd* / Mark Blake, *Pigs Might Fly: The Inside Story of Pink Floyd* / Mark Paytress, *I Was There: Gigs That Changed the World* / Jon Savage, *Psychedelia: The 100 Greatest Classics Guide* / Mick Rock, *Psychedelic Renegades* / Matthew Scurfield, *I Could Be Anyone* / William Pryor, *Survival of the Coolest* / Nick Kent, *The Dark Stuff: Selected Writings on Rock Music 1972-1993* / Tim Ellison, *Psychedelic Music and Surrealism* / Rob Chapman, *A Very Irregular Head: The Artlife of Syd Barrett*.

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Plexus

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I'd particularly like to thank Tom Branton and Dick Porter for their editing work.
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In memoriam

Roger Barrett
Rick Wright

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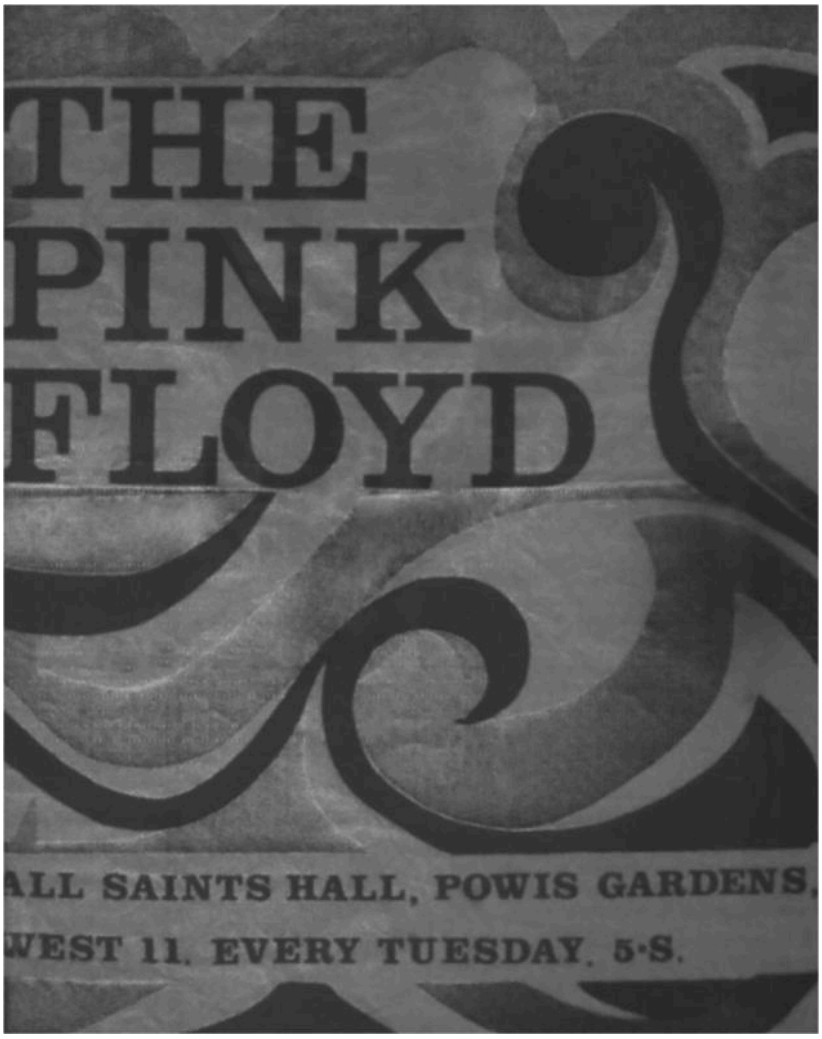
Syd Barrett, in transition from art student to pop star. January 1967, Highgate, London.

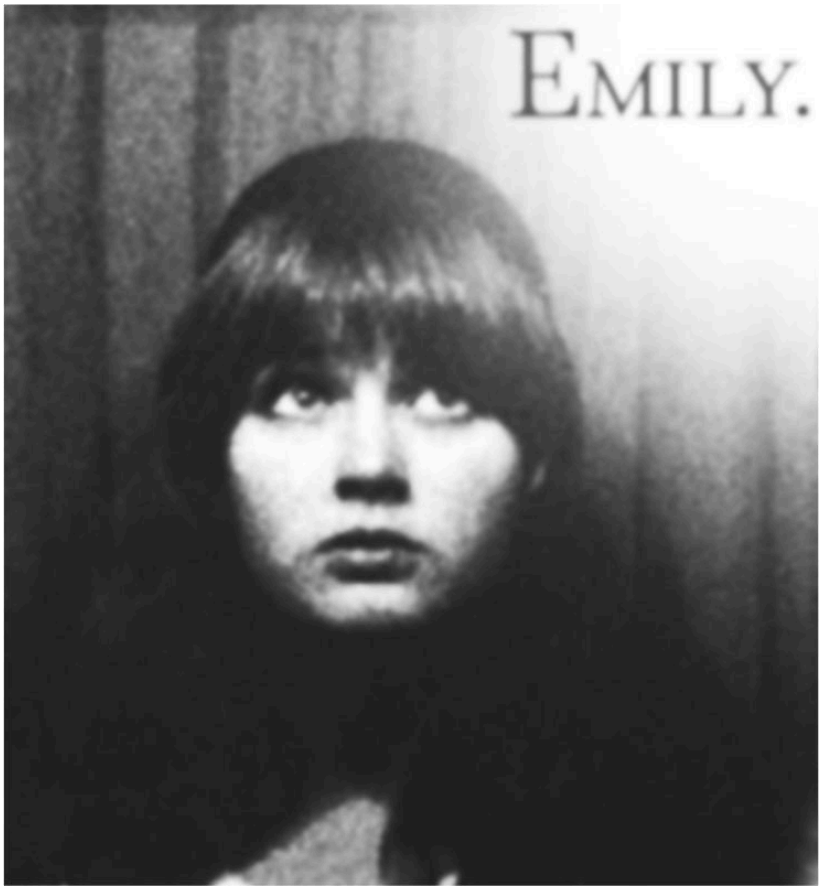
Syd at Hills Road, 1965. (Credit: Iain Moore)



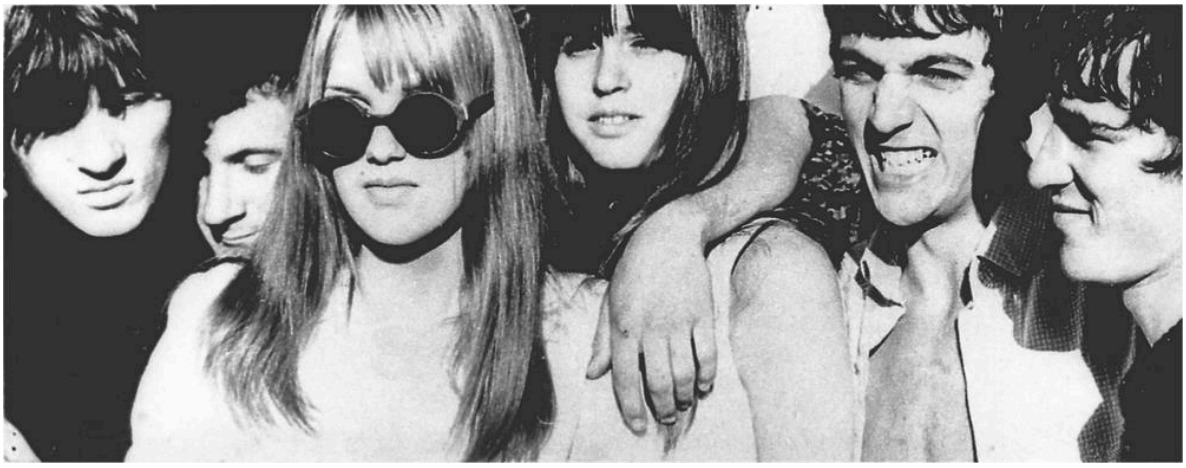
Poster for the Pink Floyd's pivotal series of gigs at the All Saints Vicarage Hall in Powis Gardens, Notting Hill, London, Autumn 1966. Roger Waters observed that the turnout steadily increased from 'about twenty people when we first played, the second week a hundred, then four hundred, and after that you couldn't get in'.

Rare flyer for the launch of underground newspaper International Times, *15 October 1966. Daevid Allen of Soft Machine described the* IT *launch as 'one of the most revolutionary events in the history of English alternative music and thinking*'.

Pink Floyd performing live onstage at the launch party for International Times *underground newspaper. Roundhouse, Chalk Farm, London, 15 October 1966.*



Emily Young, fifteen years old in 1966. Young recalls, 'All Saints was definitely the cool scene in a street way. I was glad to be there.' (Credit: Emily Young)



Syd in Cambridge, summer 1966, with friends (from left) Iain 'Emo' Moore, Ian 'Pip' Carter, girlfriend Lindsay Corner, Emo's girlfriend Frances 'Fiz' Fitzgerald, and Tony Joliffe from local band the Swingin' Hi-Fi's.

Syd, after a gig at the Architectural Association's Student Christmas Carnival, London, 16 December 1966. 'Syd was a painter first and foremost but he always had a way with words and in this he was an artist too,' asserts Jenny Spires. 'I don't think he was interested in being a pop star at all, but it was all very exciting when it started to happen. Fame is one thing, but I don't think he was prepared for what it meant.'

Pink Floyd launch London's underground club UFO, 23 December 1966.

UFO flyer, February 1967. 'I went to UFO on my first acid trip,' says Jenny Fabian. 'We got out at Tottenham Court Road. It looked fantastic. I thought, "Well, it really is quite nice."' Mick Farren wrote of UFO: 'At first sight the whole thing looked weird, a wide flight of stairs with vestigial remains of thirties opulence led down off the street to the basement club. At the bottom of the stairs, you stepped through the door; the assault on your senses was so intense as to be almost physical.'

Pink Floyd – Nick Mason, Rick Wright, Roger Waters and Syd Barrett, January 1967. 'Only lately have the Pink Floyd been doing much work,' Nick Mason explained. 'In the past we played about one date a fortnight and spent the rest of the time sitting in pubs saying how nice it would be to be famous.'

EMI Records present their newest pop signings Pink Floyd at a press reception (left to right): Rick Wright, Roger Waters, Syd Barrett and Nick Mason. EMI House, Manchester Square, London, 1 April 1967.

At EMI House, Manchester Square, London, 1 April 1967.

GAMES FOR MAY
THE PINK FLOYD
On Friday, 12th May, 1967 at 7:45 p.m. in the Queen Elizabeth Hall, South Bank, S.E.1, Christopher Hunt and Blackhill Enterprises present GAMES FOR MAY — space-age relaxation for the climax of Spring Electronic compositions, colour and image projections, girls, and THE PINK FLOYD Tickets: 21/-, 15/-, 10/- from the box office, Royal Festival Hall, S.E.1 (WAT 3191) and agents.
QUEEN ELIZABETH HALL/MAY 12

Games for May, Queen Elizabeth Hall, 12 May 1967. Games for May marked the midpoint between Barrett's spontaneous happenings and Waters's structural ambitions.

Pink Floyd during rehearsals for the group's show Games for May at the Queen Elizabeth Hall in London, 12 May 1967. Left to right: Rick Wright, Nick Mason and Syd Barrett. Syd Barrett made a prescient remark: 'Really, we have only just started to scrape the surface of effects and ideas of lights and music combined. We think the music and the lights are part of the same scene. One enhances and adds to the other. In the future, groups are going to have to offer much more than just a pop show. They'll have to offer a well-presented theatre show.'

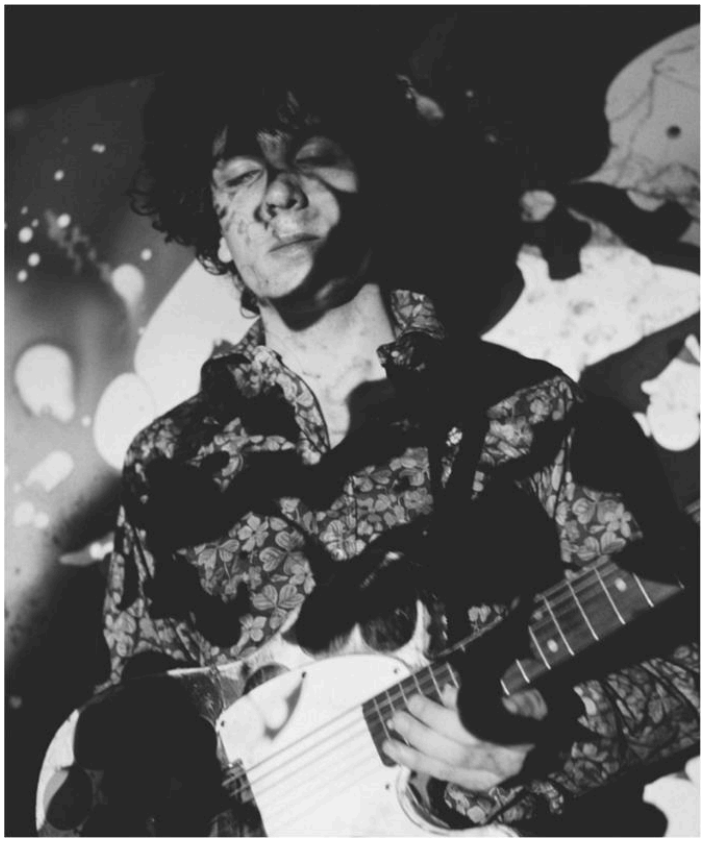
On a five-day Scandinavian tour, Syd Barrett takes the ferry from Denmark to Sweden, September 1967. 'One listens to the Copenhagen recording and Syd, at least on that evening, is still leading Pink Floyd,' observes journalist Chris Moise. 'Syd is improvising and taking long inspired solos on nearly every song. Many collectors rate Syd's playing at this show as [the] high water mark of his guitar-playing career. The way Syd dances and darts all around the riff on Waters's "One in a Million" deserves special mention. Nick Mason mentioned Syd would have "good, focused periods" in the second half of 1967. Copenhagen is one of these.'

Syd Barrett in Soho, London, April 1967. With Lindsay Corner, Barrett made the scene dressed in silk and velvet, in pied patches like medieval minstrels. Walking on King's Road on Saturdays, dressed in all their finery, the couple were splendid peacocks on parade. In a luminous dash, they prowled boutiques, piecing a unisex wardrobe mix of gypsy, aristocrat, harlequin and harlot – all quite fitting for the Piper of the Underground.

Pink Floyd at the Alexandra Palace for the ill-fated Love-In Festival, 29 July 1967. Rick Wright said, 'Ally Pally was when we realised he'd really lost it.'

THIS SATURDAY!!
ERIC BURDON
THE ANIMALS
PINK FLOYD
BRIAN AUGER
JULIE DRISCOLL
TRINITY
ARTHUR BROWN
CREATION
TOMORROW
BLOSSOM TOES
PINKERTON'S ASSORTED COLOURS
DEEP FEELING
HAPPY MAGAZINE
FLOWER MARKET
LOVE IN FESTIVAL
SATURDAY JULY 29th
PALACE
LONDON
JIM GOPAL
BUS FERRY from WOOD GREEN TUBE to the Palace
Tickets £1 from:
Love-in Box Office (open till midnight), Photo Centre, 2 Shaftesbury Avenue, Piccadilly Circus, Keith Prowse, 90 New Bond Street, Abbey Box, 27 Victoria Street, Better Books, 94 Charing Cross Road, Indica, 102 Southampton Row, Hampstead Record Centre, 72 Heath Street, Love-in Stall, Portobello Road, Saturday, Take Six, 66 Wardour Street, Ashton & Mitchell, Alfred Hayes, 100 St. Martin's Lane, John Trapp, 24 Crouch End Hill, One Stop Records, 40 South Molton Street, H. J. Adams, 5 Grosvenor Street, and from Alexandra Palace on the night. Telephone enquiries ABB 4261

A flyer for the Love-In Festival, 29 July 1967.



Syd Barrett, in photographer Andrew Whittuck's Hampstead bedroom, under Peter Wynne-Willson's lightshow, London, July 1967.

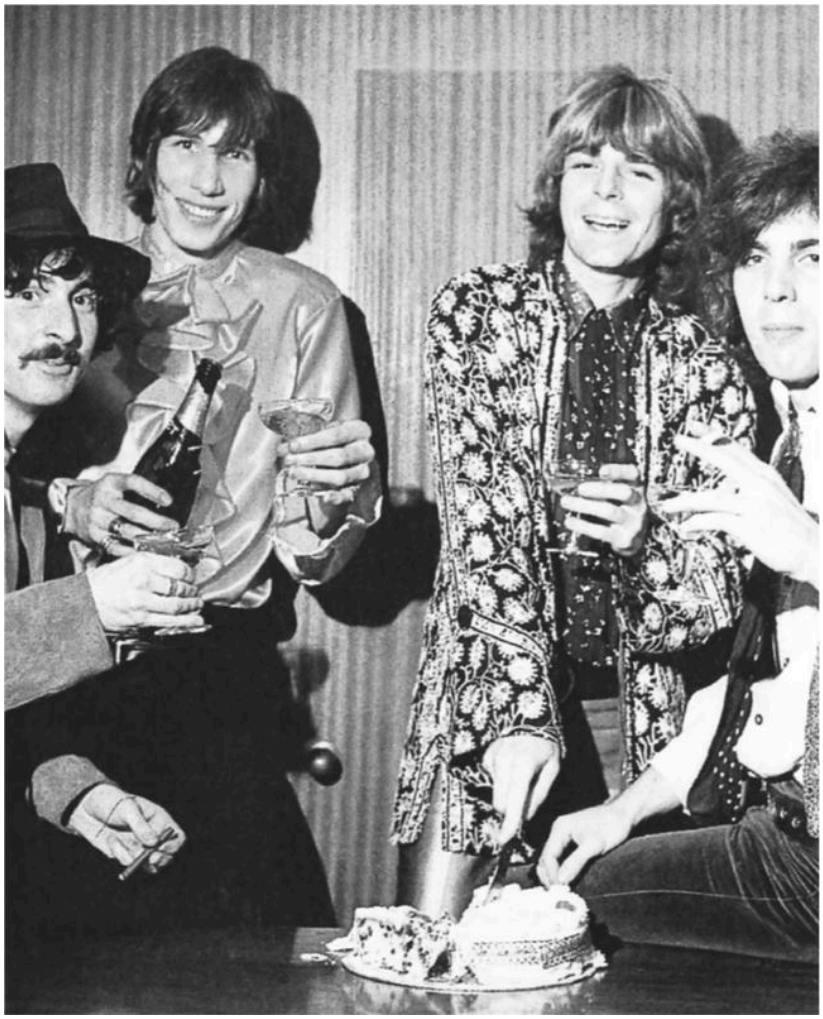
Syd Barrett and Jenny Spires in the kitchen at 101 Cromwell Road, South Kensington, July 1967.

Syd Barrett, Roger Waters, Nick Mason and Rick Wright pose for a group portrait on 11 September 1967 in Copenhagen, Denmark.

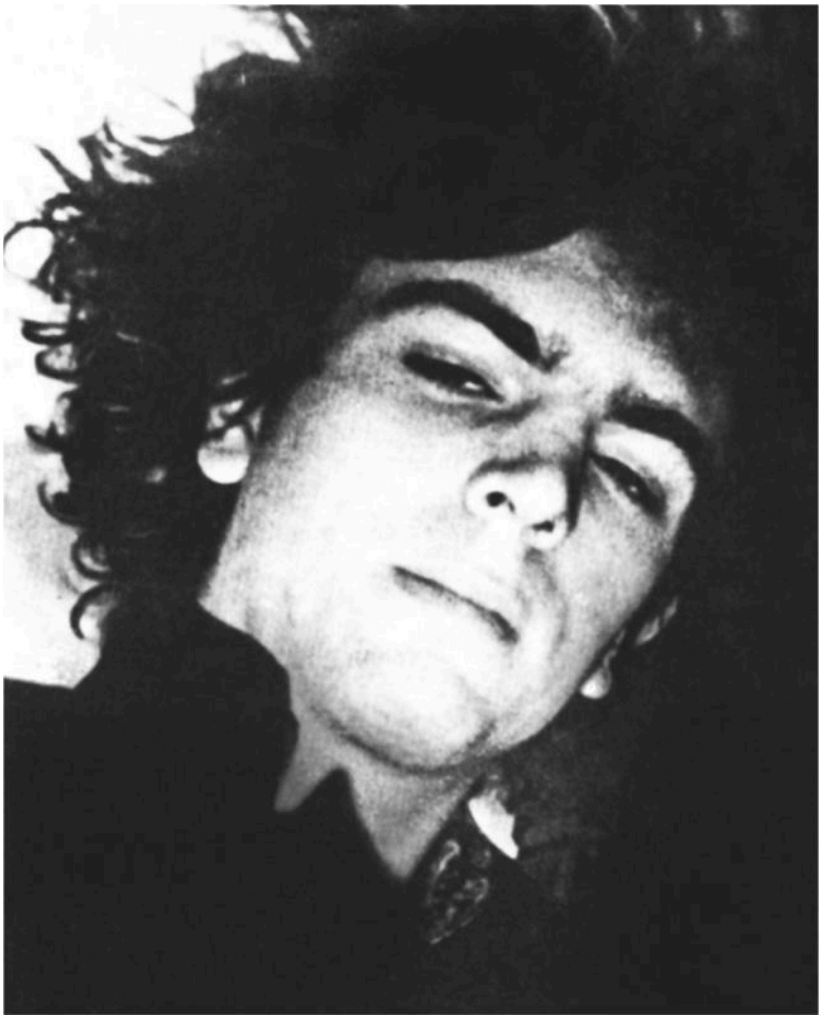
Nick Mason, Syd Barrett, Rick Wright, and Roger Waters at De Lane Lea Studios, October 1967.

Syd Barrett playing Rick Wright's Farfisa organ during the sessions for '(Down in the) Beechwoods', De Lane Lea Studios, 20-21 October 1967.

Pink Floyd standing behind a mixing desk at De Lane Lea Studios. Left to right: Roger Waters, Nick Mason, Syd Barrett and Rick Wright.



Photographed for teen magazine Fabulous*, October 1967.*



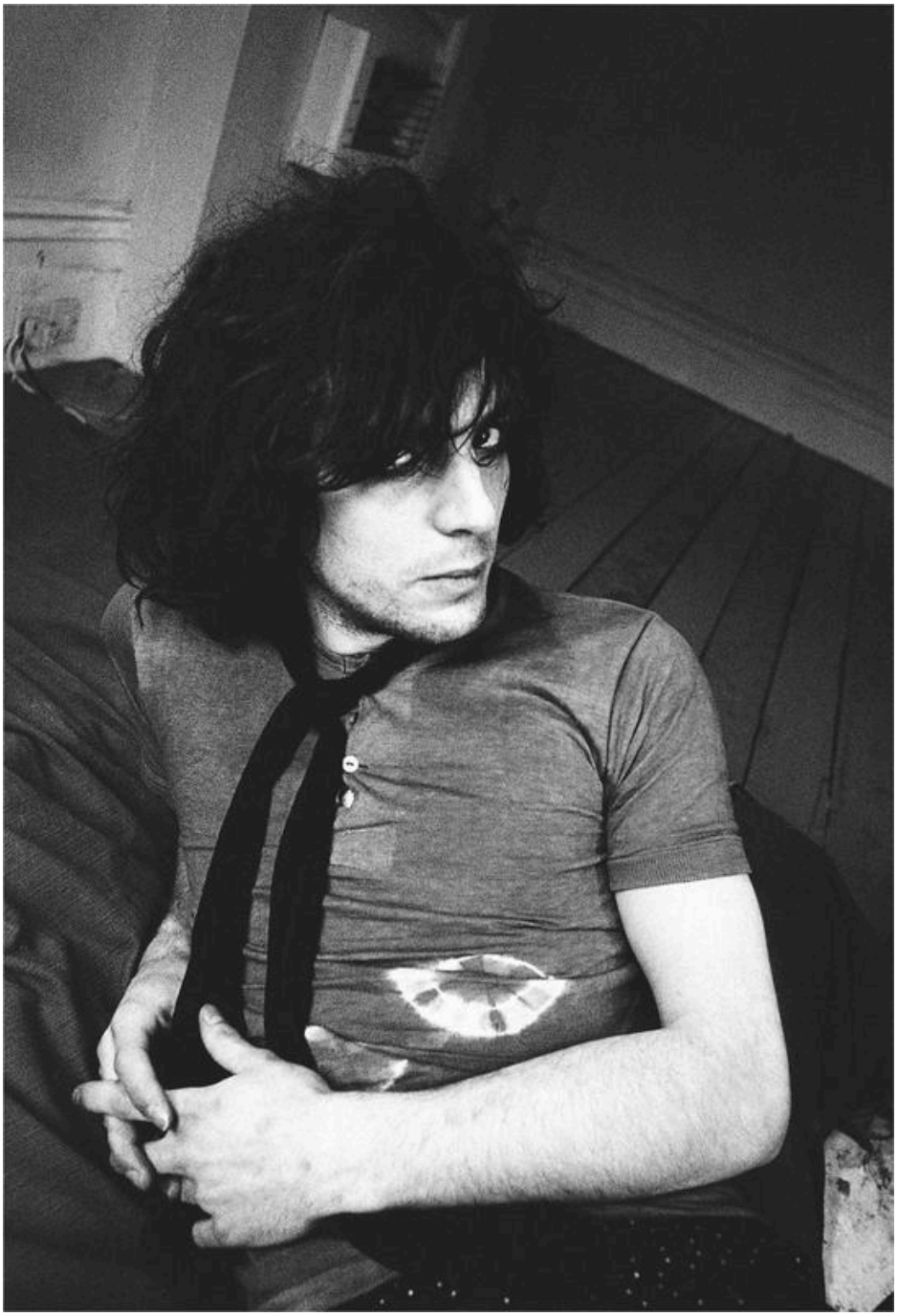
Syd, under Tower Bridge, 2 October 1967. Peter Jenner commented, 'People would come up to him, out of their skull, and say, "Syd, what's it all about? What does it all mean?"'

Rick Wright, Roger Waters and Syd Barrett, below Tower Bridge, London, 2 October 1967. Co-manager Andrew King commented, 'There was little communication between Syd and the rest of Pink Floyd. It's hard to manage a group in that state. He seemed withdrawn, much of the time he seemed fine.'

2 October 1967. 'There had often been times when you would get a strange look in Syd's eyes, just fleeting,' said Peter Wynne-Willson.

Waving or signalling for help? Barrett and the Pink Floyd, in the ruins of St George in the East church, 2 October 1967.

Mirroring the shadows of psychedelia, Barrett's demeanour was gothic long before it became a cultural subset. He commented, 'If I wanted to say nothing or if I want to act in an extraordinary way, then I feel that that too is justified.'



Syd Barrett, in an outtake from The Madcap Laughs *album cover session, April 1969. 'Most people have an image of Syd as a dark, brooding, secretive and inarticulate prince of psychedelia gone haywire,' says Mick Rock. 'And that probably is a legitimate part of this curious tale, but it is only part of it.'*

Pink Floyd backstage at the Saville Theatre, London, 1 October 1967. 'I didn't go backstage. I actually thought Syd played better than at Ally Pally,' recalls Jenny Spires.

Rick Wright takes note of Syd's proto-punk hairdo as the band struggle through difficult sessions and prepare to travel to America, 2 October 1967.

Pink Floyd backstage, debuting on 14 November 1967 at the Royal Albert Hall, on the first night of a package tour of Britain, with the Jimi Hendrix Experience, the Move, Amen Corner, the Nice, Heir Apparent and Outer Limits.

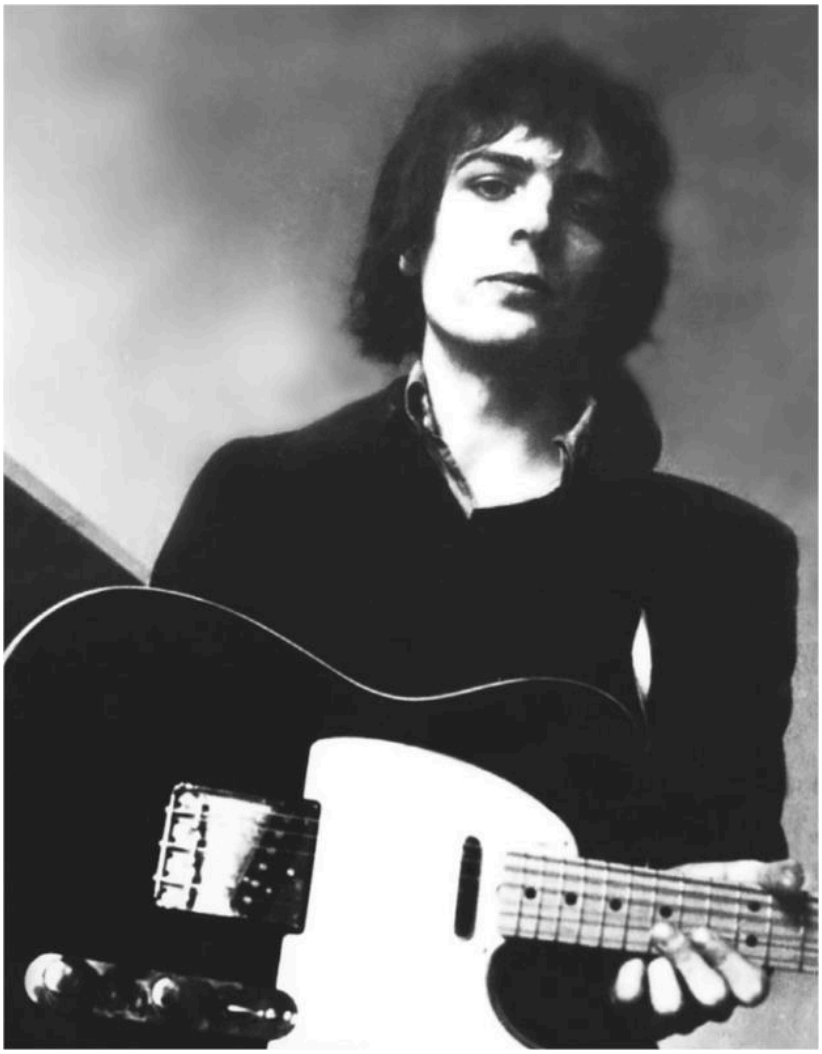
Syd Barrett with friends Mary Wing and Marc Tessier, Formentera, Spain, July 1969.

A rare photograph of the five-man Pink Floyd, featuring Syd Barrett and Cambridge friend David Gilmour, January 1968. Barrett said, 'It wasn't really a war. I suppose it was really just a matter of being a little offhand about things. We didn't feel there was one thing which was gonna make the decision at the minute. I mean, we did split up, and there was a lot of trouble. I don't think the Pink Floyd had any trouble, but I had an awful scene, probably self-inflicted, having a mini and going all over England and things. Still …'

Harvest Records' promotional advertisement for The Madcap Laughs *album, 1969. 'Syd was in good shape when he made* The Madcap Laughs,' *stated Peter Jenner. 'He was still writing good songs.'*

Syd Barrett photographed during the recording of The Madcap Laughs, *1969.*

Syd Barrett on his ill-advised final press junket. Bruton Place, London, February 1971.



Living in Cambridge for the past year, Barrett holds his Fender Telecaster.

Roger Barrett photographed in Cambridge on the morning of his sixtieth birthday, 6 January 2006. He died seven months later.

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